CONTEMPORARY YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN HAWAIʻI AND THE PACIFIC: GENRE, DIASPORA, AND OCEANIC FUTURES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation draws on scholarship in the fields of Young Adult literature, Pacific literature, Indigenous education, and critical pedagogy in order to begin the process of defining, evaluating, and teaching literature targeted for adolescent readers in Oceania since the year 2000. Pasifika youth are a population at high risk for a variety of negative outcomes as a result of colonial structures of power that marginalize Indigenous peoples in Oceania, a condition compounded by sustained practices of diaspora and the effects of globalizing forces in the region that result in fragmented and mixed identities. I argue that in its ongoing emergence, Young Adult Literatures of Oceania (YALO) is uniquely positioned to intervene in these issues because in addition to being both developmentally appropriate and decolonial, as a mixed literature—belonging to both YA and Pacific literatures—it reflects the ʻafakasi subjectivities of the youth that it is meant to serve.

Drawing on the frameworks of Albert Wendt's vision for a New Oceania and Gloria Anzaldúa's new mestiza, I theorize the concept of the new ʻafakasi, which expands the term's primary meaning of "mixed race" to encompass all aspects of mixed identity. Using a new ʻafakasi framework that is sensitive to the multiple tensions negotiated by Pasifika youth, I illustrate how YALO texts provide useful models for negotiating conflicting identity. Three major ways that YALO participates in decolonial efforts are (1) through its literary representations of Pasifika adolescence, which portray these youth as intelligent, culturally competent, and powerful; (2) in its creative adaptations of Pacific stories and storytelling forms, which engage Oceanic youth with Indigenous histories and ways of knowing; and (3) via its legitimizing Pasifika intellectual production and encouraging Indigenous pedagogical practices in secondary schools. These functions have additional impacts on settler youth, who can be

encouraged to develop settler allyship through engagement with YALO. In arguing for a sustained engagement with literature written for adolescents, my research begins to fill the need for scholarship in Pacific literary studies that attends to the needs of Pasifika youth, who are arguably one of the most marginalized groups in the region.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELA	English Language Assessment
HCE	Hawai‘i Creole English
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
USP	University of the South Pacific
YA	Young Adult
YAL	Young Adult literatures
YALO	Young Adult Literatures of Oceania

INTRODUCTION: IN SEARCH OF A NEW ‘AFAKASI LITERATURE FOR OCEANIC YOUTH

Locating Young Adult Literature in Oceania

Most scholars identify the genesis of Anglophone Pacific literatures[1] as the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the notable appearance of “first generation” writers such as Albert Wendt, Witi Ihimaera, John Dominis Holt, ‘Epeli Hau‘ofa, Konai Helu Thaman, and others (Subramani, *South Pacific* ix; Wendt 2; Keown 9). This frequent attribution makes it easy to overlook the remarkable publication of *Miss Ulysses from Puka-Puka* (1946) nearly twenty years prior, when Florence (Johnnie) Frisbie became one of the first Indigenous[2] Pacific Islander women to publish a book in English at the age of 15.[3] Frisbie’s autobiographical work narrates the adventures of her family as they frequently relocated among various island nations throughout her childhood. I find it illuminating that a book often recognized as the earliest offering of Anglophone literature by a Pacific Islander centers the experiences of a diasporic, mixed-race adolescent[4] negotiating her identity across ever-changing cultural, political, ethnic, linguistic, and physical landscapes.

When it comes to the formative experiences of adolescents in Oceania, things haven’t changed much in the 70 years since the publication of *Miss Ulysses*—like Frisbie and her siblings, the region’s increasingly diasporic and mixed-race youth continue to struggle through negotiating complex identities. What has changed, and provided the genesis for this project, is the growth of a small but significant body of literature written for and about them. In a way, the emergence of Young Adult Literatures of Oceania (YALO) brings the field of Pacific literature full circle: just as comparatively little scholarly attention was paid to Frisbie’s germinal work (Sharrad, “Making Beginnings” 125), so too have contemporary scholars largely overlooked the development of YALO. To be fair, such an oversight is understandable in a field as young as

Pacific literature—most of our critical energy up to this point has rightfully been focused on defining, encouraging, and legitimizing literary production in the region. Fortunately, thanks to the accumulation of a critical mass of literary and scholarly texts over the past several decades, it is now appropriate and necessary to begin studying subsets of the field, including YALO. Because YALO studies is a nascent field with a fast-growing body of literature and almost no critical attention from scholars, my research fills an acute need for the examination of texts targeting and representing Pacific Islander youth, a historically underserved and often vulnerable population. I argue that the recognition, criticism, and dissemination of YALO requires focused scholarly attention within the field of Pacific literature because of the texts' role in shaping the cultural knowledges, attitudes, and purposes of the youth tasked with determining the future of our region.

YALO's contributions to the broader fields of both Pacific literatures and Young Adult literatures (YAL) in English are currently unfolding on several fronts. First, these texts are rich sites for analysis of constructions of adolescence and adolescents, which is significant in a region where Pacific Islander youth continue to be stereotyped—and/or neglected—with negative consequences by educators, law enforcement, community members, and in news media and popular culture. As texts primarily written by adults for youth, the literature reflects attitudes about adolescents, culture, language, and worldview that either participate in or subvert settler and colonial agendas in the region. As such, these constructions have material consequences for their young readers. Because the condition of adolescence is concomitant with coming of age, it is a site of power negotiation between the adolescent, adults, and—importantly—institutions (Trites xi-xii). Consequently, texts about adolescence can function as potent sites of interpellation into existing power structures, but this very quality also gives them the potential to

act in powerfully resistant and decolonial ways.[5] Another notable quality of YALO texts is that they often reflect the experimental form and content characteristic of the broader body of YAL, resulting in new and unique portrayals of Indigenous oral narrative forms and creole language use, visual literature, and importantly, stories and storytelling. As such, they are influential sites of cultural transmission and creativity that exemplify Wendt's insistent call for the creation of a "new Oceania." Finally, as literature written for Oceania's youth about the issues that they face while coming of age in one of the most diverse regions in the world, YALO has the potential to play a powerful role in educational settings by exposing both Indigenous and settler youth with positive representations of Oceanic languages, cultures, and worldviews. In this dissertation, I begin the process of defining and evaluating YALO as an emergent literature for Oceanic youth by examining texts through an 'afakasi theoretical and pedagogical framework that uncovers how prominent functions of YALO such as the positive representation of Pasifika youth and the creative reconstitution of Indigenous story encourage the development of a new 'afakasi consciousness. Characterized by a shift in worldview that emphasizes inclusion, cooperation, and creative problem solving, the new 'afakasi consciousness honors the multiple identities of Pasifika and settler adolescents while moving both towards meaningful decolonization.

Mapping YALO Studies

Despite a small but rich and growing archive of texts, existing scholarship on adolescent literature in Oceania is sparse, often limited to conference proceedings, booklists, or standalone journal articles and book chapters. The biennial Children's Literature Hawai'i Conference has published conference proceedings since the early 1980s, while the 1996 annotated bibliography *Literature for Children and Young Adults about Oceania* by Mary C. Austin et al. groups texts regionally—Australia, New Zealand, and "Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia"—as well as by

type—Folk Literature, Contemporary Literature, Nonfiction—and includes booklists with plot synopses and recommended reading grade level for children and adolescents. D.S. Long begins to trace the importance of children's literature to the field of Pacific literature in his 1999 essay "In Search of a Written Fagogo: Contemporary Pacific Literature for Children," part of the important Pacific Studies anthology *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific.* A few articles in prominent children's/YA journals like *The Lion and the Unicorn* and the *ALAN Review*—Craig Howes' 1987 "Hawaii Through Western Eyes: Orientalism and Historical Fiction for Children" or Janet Benton's 1996 "Voices of Hawaii in Literature for Adolescents: Getting Past Pineapples and Paradise"—establish the importance of being cognizant of colonial legacies when examining literature for youth in the region. Other articles specifically addressing YALO discuss the importance of portraying Local culture and language in Hawai‘i (Bean), using comics to tell Hawaiian mo‘olelo for adolescents (Kuwada), why literature for Pasifika youth is so important (Marsh "The Body"), and how Chamorro culture is represented in children's and YA literature (Storie). More recently, essays by scholars based at Victoria University of Wellington in the anthology *A Made Up Place: New Zealand in Young Adult Fiction* (Jackson et al.) focus on representations of "New Zealandness," addressing issues of place and identity for youth in the country. A 2016 special issue of *Bookbird* likewise focuses on texts from Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific in order "to capture some of the excitement of the children's and YA books being published in Oceania today, while looking seriously at some of the issues and concerns that the literature raises" (Jackson 8). Hawaiian literature scholar ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui also discusses several contemporary Hawaiian YAL texts in a 2017 book chapter about children and pets in Hawaiian culture ("Moamahi").

All of this work is vital, especially since it is this handful of texts that essentially comprise the entire corpus of existing scholarship relevant to the study of YALO. That being said, there is clearly a need for much more critical attention in this area. For example, much of the existing scholarship has a tendency to classify YALO as a subset of children's literature, or worse, to conflate the two. Such grouping is useful for work that functions as introductory or overview scholarship about texts for young readers, as the two fields share many areas of concern. However, distinguishing between children's and YA literatures is necessary to perform more nuanced analyses, as Roberta Trites explains:

> The basic difference between a children's and an adolescent novel lies not so much in how the protagonist grows…but with the very determined way that YA novels tend to interrogate social constructions, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual rather than focusing on Self and self-discovery as children's literature does. (20)

In other words, children's literature and YAL do different ideological work, and in order to better understand the function of these texts within the corpus of Oceanic literatures, we need scholarship that attends to these differences and their consequences for readers.

Conflating YALO and children's literature can also create the false impression that there are a great deal of these texts available and in production. In actuality, while the children's book market in Oceania is fairly robust, production of YAL texts within the region has been slow and sporadic. As a result, Selina Tusitala Marsh cites a need for more Pacific texts that reflect the subjectivities of Pasifika students (i.e. youth Indigenous to Oceania, but often living outside their ancestral homelands) because, as she emphasizes, "access to Pacific literature can influence the body of Pacific youth positively" ("The Body" 3-4). Currently, these benefits are not being

realized because Pacific literature for youth is scarce and difficult to access. In a recent survey of Hawaiian language fiction, Dominic Cheetham laments that "young children now have picture books to read, but once they have progressed beyond picture books they have almost nowhere to go" (293). Aotearoa is ahead of the curve in this regard, with publishers such as Huia Press increasingly publishing books for adolescent readers with both te reo Māori and English versions. However, these books are still published only occasionally, and as a subset of an already-tiny market.

Concern about this overall lack of books for adolescents is echoed by Hawaiian scholar Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada, who argues that lagging literary production for youth could potentially result in a culturally and linguistically "lost generation" (107-8). Marsh also warns that a shortage of this literature reinforces stereotypes of Pacific Islander youth as unintelligent and lacking positive representation in the cultural consciousness of the region, leading to further disenfranchisement and self-destructive behavior, including suicide. She asserts that reading and teaching Pacific texts to these youth results in the "emancipation of under-represented selves" through literature, which she calls "the backbone of identity politics for disenfranchised groups" (Marsh, "The Body" 4). Since literature is "one of the key sites of ideological interpellation through which children are called to identify with models and ideals, but also through which they learn what counts as an identity and the processes whereby one achieves one" (Coats 112), representations of culture in literature hold high stakes, especially for young readers who may not have the benefit of growing up in their Indigenous homeland or whose traditional practices have been severely disrupted by long-term colonization.

YALO continues the process of interpellation through its portrayal of adolescence and its interrogation of structures of power, which necessarily includes ongoing processes of

colonization and decolonizing efforts in Oceania. As Lee Talley notes, Young Adult (YA) texts written "according to what readers between the ages of twelve and eighteen (or twenty-five) would enjoy or benefit from reveals assumptions about adolescent readers" made by adult authors (229). In other words, YALO is written by adults for youth, and as such, representations of adolescents accepting or resisting colonial norms reflect adult desires for youth behavior. Close attention to these narratives uncovers not only adults' socializing agendas for youth, but also the individuals and institutions that youth are expected to respect and/or challenge.

Another important avenue for criticism I explore in this project is how YALO adapts the oral literature of Oceania into print in ways that are distinct from adaptations geared towards children and adult/general readerships. In his influential study of Wendt's work, Paul Sharrad states that in order to discuss Wendt's writing—and by extension, other Pacific writers' work—it is critical to acknowledge and gain an understanding of oral literature, including cosmogonies, genealogies, histories, and oral forms (e.g. fāgogo or fale aitu) (*Albert Wendt* 21-2). Michelle Keown echoes this claim, arguing that the practice of "incorporating oral literary patterns into…printed narratives" is a defining characteristic of Indigenous Pacific literature (174). This defining characteristic of literatures of Oceania has important implications for decolonizing young readers, because "what we mean by a story in English can be quite a different concept from what is meant by a story in another language. There is a strong cultural element in what people expect from a storyteller or writer" (Long 239). Introducing children and adolescents to Indigenous oral forms in printed literature provides a counterpoint to Western definitions of "story" and/or "history," which often mean the same thing from an Indigenous perspective. Long argues that "Children's books create…expectations: they teach each new generation of readers what makes a good story and perhaps, at some unconscious level, even what a story is" (232). In

a region where control of narratives translates to control of power, attentiveness to the stories and histories our youth are learning can directly impact how current power structures will be accepted or resisted over time.

Finally, because these are texts targeted at adolescent readers, it is also important to articulate their potential roles in educational settings, which are powerful institutions that shape youth understanding of history, culture, and literacy in Oceania. Tongan poet, scholar, and educator Thaman explains that "In [Tongan], to study is ako, a term that is also used for education, which I define as an introduction to worthwhile learning" (2). Because what is considered "worthwhile" to learn has been defined by colonizing forces for over 200 years, Thaman argues that education should shift its focus to privilege "indigenous Oceanic perspectives, knowledge, and wisdom that have been devalued or suppressed because they were or are not considered important or worthwhile" (2). hoʻomanawanui outlines several reasons why it is important to affirm Indigenous worldviews within the context of Hawaiian land-based education: in addition to building self-esteem in Hawaiian students, it develops an understanding of what is "culturally important to know, to learn, and to pass on" ("'Ike ʻĀina" 206). It also teaches non-Hawaiians to "appreciate and respect the indigenous people of Hawaiʻi" (hoʻomanawanui, "'Ike ʻĀina" 208). Indigenous scholars Tiffany Lee and Patricia Cerecer explain that the result of these educational outcomes creates leaders who are conscious of the issues facing their people; rather than simply liberate individuals, Indigenous literacy develops students with a "critical Indigenous consciousness" who "embrace the role Indigenous leaders play in providing service to their community and people" (Lee and Cerecer 1). From a critical literacy standpoint, YALO is well-positioned to achieve these outcomes, but only if it gains

traction among educators who are willing to include them in curricula and teach them in culturally and historically responsible ways.

Key Concepts and Methodology

One of the challenges in evaluating YALO is working through the complex heterogeneity of the youth populations the literature is meant to serve. Centuries of sustained migration and cultural exchange prior to Western contact followed by more rapid changes in the last 200 years as a result of colonizing and globalizing forces has resulted in youth with fragmented racial, cultural, and political identities alongside a wide range of attitudes concerning individual responsibility to land and Indigenous peoples in the region. Hau‘ofa provides an in-depth history of colonial mapping and naming practices that reduced Oceanic peoples to inhabitants of small "islands in a far sea," isolated and adrift in the Pacific (31). Geographic and racial labelling of groups into "Melanesians," "Micronesians," and "Polynesians" has further segmented and isolated indigenous peoples (Keown 13). Hau‘ofa reconceptualizes this perspective of smallness and division by advocating the use of the name "Oceania" to shift the focus from the land to a more inclusive and vast "sea of islands" (31). Referring to the region as Oceania sidelines colonial labels that have historically functioned to divide Pacific peoples, especially since the term "captures this holistic sense of people sharing a common environment and living together for their mutual benefit." (Teasdale, et al 36). It is within this context of a vast yet connected Oceania that Pacific diaspora can best be understood.

Movement by Oceanic peoples among island groups is nothing new (Hau‘ofa 33-4), but more recent colonizing and globalizing forces have intensified migration on a much larger scale, in many cases resulting in larger populations of a given group in the diaspora than in their home islands (Spickard et al 19). While the result of this Oceanic movement has had negative effects

on identity and culture, I choose to adhere to Hau‘ofa’s expansive conception of Pacific diaspora as “a large exchange community in which wealth and people with their skills and arts circulated endlessly” (33). In doing so, I resist concepts of diaspora as a “scattering” that isolates and disconnects peoples from their homelands; rather, diaspora allows Pacific Islanders to extend and share and build community. This sense of community is particularly true of diasporic populations in Aotearoa New Zealand, which has seen such a large influx of non-Māori Pacific immigrants that it has been called a “Polynation” (Marsh, “Pasifika Poetry” 198). As a result, the term “Pasifika” has come into popular usage in scholarship examining the implications of immigrant communities forming a shared identity despite coming from diverse backgrounds.[6] According to Marsh,

> Pasifika is used to describe the Pacific diaspora in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It also includes Maori and acknowledges a pan-Pacific commonality based on similar genealogical, historical, and mythological narratives with the aim of strengthening a sense of collective voice and representation in specific contexts. (“Pasifika Poetry” 199)

An Indigenized version of the colonial label “Pacific,” the term Pasifika[7] simultaneously recognizes the colonial history of the region as well as ongoing decolonization efforts by Indigenous peoples. I extend its use beyond Aotearoa New Zealand to include any Indigenous Pacific Islander population in the world because “Pasifika creates inclusivity in a context where commonalities become more important than differences, especially when seeking political, social or historical representation” (Marsh, “Pasifika Poetry” 199). With the rise of communicative power through the internet and social media, “pan-Pacific commonalit[ies]” can be found in shared content and other forms of expression by Pasifika youth whether they are products of diaspora or still living in their ancestral homelands. At the same time, I am committed to

respecting the differences among Oceanic cultural groups; as Tanya Wendt Samu notes, "a collectivising term such as Pasifika can be understood and used as a discourse that recognises, values and respects the various unique Pacific nations as well as drawing groups together" (40). While my use of Pasifika includes all Pacific Islander populations, I refer to individual culture groups by name within the context of their own ancestral lands in order to privilege ongoing land claims and sovereignty efforts that might otherwise be subsumed within the larger group issues.

In addition to the movement of Indigenous peoples throughout and beyond the region, there are enormous settler populations that are equally complex, including haole/pākehā/palagi (i.e. white) but also other minority settler groups largely brought in during the 18th and 19th centuries as colonial workforces. These are responsible in part for a significant Asian presence in Hawai'i as well as Indo-Fijians in Fiji, although it is important to recognize that ongoing immigration continues to increase settler populations region-wide. To that end, I use the term "settler" rather than "immigrant" or "local" to describe any group—Indigenous or non-Indigenous—that does not have ancestral ties to a particular land in order to highlight "the structural distinction between Natives and settlers" within colonial states (Fujikane, *Asian Settler Colonialism* 6). Without such a distinction, the result is what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang term "colonial equivocation," or "the homogenizing of various experiences of oppression as colonization. Calling different groups 'colonized' without describing their relationship to settler colonialism is an equivocation" (18). Making a distinction between Indigenous peoples and settlers is particularly important in places like Hawai'i and Aotearoa New Zealand, where minority groups have cited their own hardships in relation to colonial structures as claims to place that erase ongoing Indigenous claims to land and self-determination. To that end, my definition of decolonization is aligned with Tuck and Yang's call for literal decolonization, or

the restoration of land to Indigenous peoples (1); however, I also recognize that this is most likely to be achieved through ideological decolonization, or what Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o has termed "decolonizing the mind." Because Oceania is home to large settler populations who also happen to wield the majority of power in the region, this ideological decolonization should ideally extend beyond Indigenous populations to include everyone in the region.

Considering the complexity of the "in-betweenness" inherent in the subjectivities of Oceanic youth, it is necessary to read YALO texts through an interpretive framework that is flexible enough to recognize and evaluate the multi-tensions that they experience as they navigate growing up in a region fraught with a history of ongoing colonization and significant diaspora. In many ways, the term "'afakasi" has great potential to begin sorting through the mixed subjectivities of both Pasifika and settler youth.[8] A Samoan transliteration of "half-caste," referring to an individual of mixed race, it is primarily used today as a racial term, although historically it has also been used as a marker of class. Malama Meleisea explains that during Samoa's colonial period, legal status for 'afakasi children was determined by the race and wealth of the father, meaning that race and class designations were also highly patriarchal (160-2).[9] These complex race, class, and gender articulations of identity resulted in 'afakasi populations becoming a site of high tension in Samoan society, and the word itself has often been utilized as a derogatory term by both European colonizers and Samoans.

'Afakasi's emphasis on "half" suggests a lack of wholeness or completeness, which is in contrast to totolua, the Samoan term for mixed race meaning "two blooded," which posits mixed race as an additive condition rather than as a deficit. The more positive connotation of totolua reflects the celebrated practice of intermarriage among Samoans, Tongans, and Fijians during the pre-contact era (Meleisea 156-7). However, I maintain the use of 'afakasi rather than totolua

because the name itself—an Indigenization of a European concept—encapsulates the identity conflict and colonial history that the term is meant to negotiate.

Another reason that I use the term ‘afakasi is because in recent years, the negative perceptions surrounding ‘afakasi have begun to change. Tina Berking et al. note that “[in Aotearoa New Zealand] it is now cool to be Samoan and sexy to be Pasifika….There are indications that some young people are claiming their identity as ‘afakasi with pride” (61). In increasingly urban and globalized spaces, the mixed backgrounds of ‘afakasi individuals allow them access to multiple arenas, giving them a great deal of cultural and political capital. As a result, ‘afakasi writers have begun to celebrate an identity that was once maligned,

> defiantly rewrit[ing] the deficit identity model imposed upon them, rejecting the paradigm of cultural interpolators and trespassers, instead casting themselves as translators, path makers, and chameleons. They are bridgers of the Va between cultures and the ‘afakasi persona is perfectly positioned to break boundaries, breach protocol, and energise the Va.[10] (Marsh, “Nafanua” 368)

As holders of multiple identities, ‘afakasi have the power to effectively traverse those identities while simultaneously occupying a unique third space that is something entirely new. I call this transformative potential the new ‘afakasi, which can be conceptualized as encompassing race and class, but also every other aspect of mixed identity and/or state of between-ness, including but not limited to culture, nationality, language, gender, and spirituality. Because my articulation of the term is not limited to race, even individuals who might classify themselves as racially homogenous could still be considered ‘afakasi culturally or linguistically. Under this definition, adolescence is itself an ‘afakasi condition, existing in the transition between childhood and adulthood, having characteristics of both but also constituting its own developmental space. I

likewise see YALO as an ‘afakasi genre, able to traverse both YAL and Pacific literature, and in the process manifest something entirely new. Importantly, it centers the Indigenous while simultaneously including settler youth, which I assert is a necessary step in working towards decolonial futures.

It’s important to note here that the new ‘afakasi framework is partially developed from my own experiences as an ‘afakasi woman living as a Pasifika settler in Hawai‘i. Racially, I am a mix of European and Samoan, while culturally I identify with a blend of Hawai‘i Local, Pasifika, Samoan, and American subjectivities; I was born and raised in Hawai‘i, but my ancestral lands are in Samoa, a place I have yet to visit. Linguistically, I speak versions of Hawai‘i Creole English and Standard American English (except when I’m with my Samoan family, where I attempt to remember the Samoan language classes I took a few years ago); and depending on the context, my white-coding appearance is either privileged or a curse. The multiple ways in which I experience my ‘afakasi identity have helped me to develop a new ‘afakasi consciousness that allows me to unselfconsciously negotiate and embrace the various tensions that I experience as I move through a wide variety of places and contexts.

My personal background also influenced my choice to use the Samoan term for mixed-race, although I also do so with the understanding that the term is well-recognized and in common use within Pasifika communities. It also has not been co-opted by non-Pasifika groups, as is the case with the Hawaiian term “hapa,” which has been appropriated by many non-Hawaiian mixed-race communities.[11] That being said, there are several drawbacks to my use of ‘afakasi. As a primarily racial term, it may be difficult to get youth to embrace the expanded notion of ‘afakasi as one that extends beyond race. For example, Pasifika individuals who are not racially mixed (or are not Samoan) may resist being labeled ‘afakasi, even if my definition of it

applies to them culturally or otherwise. Similarly, Samoans unused to seeing the term used in a positive light may find difficulty endorsing its use. That being said, the tensions inherent within the history and usage of ‘afakasi model the negotiation between conflicting identities that the new ‘afakasi is meant to mediate. In other words, the messiness of the term, like the messiness of Oceanic identity, is a condition inherent in the creation of a New Oceania.

In theorizing the new ‘afakasi I draw on the work of influential thinkers Wendt and Gloria Anzaldúa. Wendt’s foundational 1976 essay “Towards a New Oceania” argues that in order to heal from the wounds of colonization, Oceanic peoples need an artistic renaissance that draws on the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region to develop skills and self-reliance. He famously declares that “our quest should not be for a revival of our past cultures but for the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly in our own pasts. Our quest should be for a New Oceania” (76). If Wendt provides the vision for what Pacific literature can and should do, Anzaldúa then provides the vehicle through which this vision can be realized. Her influential work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* conceptualizes how mixed identity creates opportunities for new ways of thinking as well as breaking down limiting binaries:

> La mestiza constantly has to shift out of habitual formation; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes. The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. (101)

I see the new ‘afakasi—and YALO as a manifestation of it—as responding to Wendt’s call for a New Oceania by celebrating rather than marginalizing the mixed subjectivities of Oceanic youth. As such, it exemplifies what Kimberley Reynolds calls the “radical potential” of literature for young people in that it “contributes to the social and aesthetic transformation of culture by…encouraging readers to approach ideas, issues, and objects from new perspectives and so prepare the way for change” (1). Like Anzaldúa’s new mestiza consciousness, the new ‘afakasi consciousness is an awareness achieved through an individual’s negotiation of their multiple selves and histories that results in the creation of “a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave” (Anzaldúa 102). The new ‘afakasi consciousness is characterized by inclusivity, which means that it is attainable for all youth in Oceania dedicated to decolonization in the region. In a region where youth are often pigeonholed into predefined identities that are often in conflict with other groups and agendas, developing a new ‘afakasi consciousness is a path that has the potential to allow youth from a variety of backgrounds to collaborate rather than contend with each other in navigating the future of the region.

As a theoretical framework, the new ‘afakasi can be utilized to center and explore the tensions inherent in mixed contexts. For example, when applied to literature, a new ‘afakasi approach examines how a given text negotiates mixing in its many forms, including but not limited to genre, character, setting, language, and narrative. The new ‘afakasi can likewise be used to create a new framework, methodology, or pedagogical approach by combining existing theories and negotiating their compatibilities and tensions. I use both approaches in this dissertation in order to perform literary analyses as well as develop a pedagogical approach to teaching YALO that is sensitive to the needs of Oceanic youth.

My primary purpose in this project is to begin the process of defining and articulating the place and purpose of YALO within the field of Pacific literature. As YALO is a literature partially defined by its target audience, the major areas of concern that I address are aligned with the needs of Pasifika youth. Colonial structures of power that maintain Indigenous dispossession through a broad range of political, economic, social, and educational strategies often create and are reinforced by negative stereotypes about Pasifika youth. As such, I prioritize YALO's decolonial potential—both literal and intellectual—as it pertains to representations of Pasifika adolescence, Indigenous story and storytelling, and educational outcomes. I see these particular areas as those most pertinent and practical for immediate decolonial action because they engage in ongoing sites of struggle for Pasifika youth. Notably, addressing these particular areas of concern also opens up avenues for engaging settler youth in decolonial projects by modeling ways that non-Indigenous youth can develop into settler allies.

Within this broader framework, I make several other considerations that allow me to focus on how YALO functions as a decolonial subgenre of Pacific literature. As an emergent literature, YALO did not begin to appear in significant numbers until the early 2000s, although there are a handful of texts prior to this date that also fit into the genre. Consequently, I focus my analysis on contemporary YALO in English since 2000 that addresses important issues, texts, and authors throughout Oceania, including Hawai'i, Aotearoa, Samoa, Guåhan, Fiji, and Tonga.[12] I exclude the Francophone Pacific for language reasons—I do not speak or read French—but may mention relevant texts written or translated in English. I also exclude Australia, where YAL production and scholarship has sufficient critical mass to support itself; that being said, examining YALO production in Australia and the Francophone Pacific are worthwhile future projects that are necessary if we hope to fully map the impact and function of

this literature. Aside from a handful of poetry and short stories, I primarily examine novels for two reasons: first, novels are the primary medium for YA literature, and as a result most YALO is written as such; secondly, from a Pacific literary perspective, YALO is the site of robust production of novels by Pasifika authors, and as such deserves sustained focus in a field where literary production predominantly consists of poetry and theatre (Marsh, "Nafanua" 369). I will not address translation issues, as this does not apply to the majority of YALO, nor will I address non-literary forms of "reading" and cultural production such as film, television, gaming, theater, slam poetry, music, art, or social media/internet production; however, examining these forms is an important next step in fleshing out YALO studies, especially since teens spend a great deal of time engaging with these mediums. Clearly—and excitingly!—this project exposes more opportunities for scholarship than it is able to fill, which is indicative of the promise inherent in the field. In approaching this project as a broader genre study rather than as an in-depth analysis of a handful of representative texts/authors, I hope to show that while there is currently enough literature available to begin defining, critiquing, and debating YALO, considering the stakes there is still much work to be done to promote the production and dissemination of texts that fit into this subgenre. Because one of my purposes is to spark scholarly and pedagogical discussions about YALO, a focus on breadth will provide a clearer overview not only of what currently exists, but where the gaps are.

Chapter Overview

In chapter one, I begin to define the generic features and functions of YALO by using a new 'afakasi approach that accounts for the compatibilities and tensions inherent in its parent literatures. I begin by outlining some of the key characteristics and issues of both YAL and Pacific literatures, followed by an 'afakasi analysis that identifies how these characteristics and

issues interact within the category of YALO. Reflecting the inclusivity of the new ‘afakasi, I argue that while a focus on authorship is important in legitimizing Indigenous voices and agendas, expanding considerations of the genre to also include function allows us to include decolonial texts written by settler allies.[13] I ultimately define YALO as an ‘afakasi genre that exists at the nexus of YAL and Pacific literature, exhibiting characteristics of both while also encompassing its own unique thematic and rhetorical functions. In the final section of the chapter, I trace the literary lineage of YALO by mapping a genealogy of Pacific texts centered around adolescents that historicizes the emergence of YALO within the last 20 years.

Chapter two explores how YALO texts contribute to decolonizing agendas in Oceania by focusing on how these texts construct adolescence and adolescents whose ‘afakasi subjectivity helps them to navigate a wide variety of issues throughout the region. The first part of the chapter contextualizes the consequences of contemporary representations and misrepresentations of Pasifika youth, arguing that both Indigenous and settler youth can benefit from positive representations of Pasifika adolescence in literature. In the remainder of the chapter, I examine a variety of YALO texts using a new ‘afakasi framework that centers adolescence and various manifestations of ‘afakasi identity in order to uncover positive adolescent representations of Pasifika and settler allies.

Chapter three focuses on the ways YALO adapts the oral literatures of Indigenous Pacific peoples for young readers, serving to transmit cultural values, histories, language, and practices to a diverse ‘afakasi audience. After discussing some of the affordances and pitfalls of adapting oral literatures into print, I argue that “remythologizing” Indigenous stories into new, imaginative narratives provides Pasifika and settler youth with models for working together as allies in creating a New Oceania. Using YALO texts as examples, the second half of the chapter

conducts a new ‘afakasi analysis that illustrates how Indigenous writers have adapted the narrative structures of their oral literatures into print in order to shape young readers’ expectations of story and storytelling. These authors have also creatively reconstituted the stories, weaving living culture heroes, gods, and their stories directly into the fabric of our contemporary world in order to render these histories both relatable and relevant to present-day youth.

The final chapter shifts away from literary analysis to a primarily pedagogical focus. Its purpose is to provide theoretical justification and practical scaffolding for teaching YALO in ways that legitimize Indigenous histories, identities, and epistemologies. I begin the chapter by contextualizing educational purposes and structures in Oceania along with the resulting outcomes for Pasifika youth. I then argue for the use of YALO in the classroom because in addition to being developmentally appropriate and engaging for adolescent readers, as ideological tools YALO texts can also function as an intervention in Western educational structures that actively work to decolonize both students and teachers. The final section functions as a pedagogical resource, addressing new ‘afakasi methods of teaching Indigenous texts as well as engaging students—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—in discussions about colonization, settler colonialism, and individual responsibility.

Conclusion

In attempting to formally define and evaluate YALO as an emergent subgenre of Pacific literature, I hope to generate awareness and scholarly interest in a field that, like Pasifika youth, is underrepresented in Oceania. The project necessarily uncovers more avenues for exploration than I am able to meaningfully address within the space of this dissertation; however, the elements of YALO that I am able highlight in the following chapters reflect my personal belief,

mediated by experience, that decolonizing Oceania is the key to addressing widespread issues faced by Pasifika youth. As I show in more detail in the following chapters, the major decolonial functions of YALO include positive constructions of Pasifika adolescence that challenge stereotypes and model resurgent behavior; creative adaptations of Oceanic stories and storytelling forms that reinscribe Indigenous history and presence in the region; and active engagement with literature in educational settings that improves educational outcomes and decolonizes teaching and learning.

Although I focus my analysis here on examples of YALO and its ramifications for Oceanic youth, this project also contributes to the larger field of Pacific studies through the new ‘afakasi theory, which intervenes in methodological debates that center Indigenous/Western as an either/or binary. It also contributes to ongoing discussions throughout the region about the development and responsibilities of settler allies. The new ‘afakasi also provides a way to enact Wendt’s vision for a New Oceania through flexibility, inclusion, and creativity. In moving towards realizing this New Oceania, the new ‘afakasi acknowledges but refuses to be impeded by identity or authenticity debates, suggesting instead that there is decolonizing potential to be celebrated right within our mixed-up, ‘afakasi selves.

CHAPTER ONE: GENEALOGY AND GENRE

Don't call me Sāmoan
Don't call me English
I am Afakasi

-Grace Teuila Evelyn Taylor,
Afakasi Speaks

In the epigraph of her poetry collection *Afakasi Speaks*, Grace Taylor defiantly embraces her identity as 'afakasi, refusing to be recognized for only a part of her heritage. While the collection as a whole is realistic about the difficulties faced by mixed-race individuals in Oceania, Taylor is committed to a definition of 'afakasi that is expansive rather than limiting:

> Afakasi is all encompassing
>
> a compass reclaiming
>
> explaining
>
> identity
>
> divorced from colonial claims
>
> reclaimed to set free. (24-5)

In much the same way, I argue that celebrating the 'afakasi subjectivity of Oceanic youth and the YALO texts that speak to their experiences is vital to decolonization efforts in the region. In this chapter, I trace the genealogy of YALO as an 'afakasi genre emerging from the expansive dual heritage of YAL and Pacific literatures. I first outline the respective generic characteristics and functions of YAL and Pacific literatures in order to reach a functional definition of YALO as a distinct subgenre that enriches both fields. I then contextualize adolescent narratives within the history of Pacific literature, identifying key texts and trends that provide the foundation for YALO's creative genesis.

Defining YALO: An ‘Afakasi Genre

Formed at the intersection of two fields with complex generic realities, YALO draws its strength from aspects of both Young Adult literature and Pacific literatures. In order to outline some of these characteristics and functions, I first summarize key debates surrounding genre in YAL and Pacific literature. Ultimately, I define YALO as a dynamic sub-genre of both that simultaneously occupies its own generic space with a unique set of thematic, formal, and rhetorical dimensions.

Young Adult literature

Debates about classification and definition have continuously troubled the reception, interpretation, and use of YAL. For example, we often use the label “YA” adjectivally to modify another genre (e.g. *YA* historical fiction, *YA* romance, *YA* dystopian). In this sense, it functions theoretically as a mode, which John Frow defines as “qualifications or modifications of particular genres…they specify thematic features and certain forms and modalities of speech, but not the formal structures or even the semiotic medium through which the text is to be realized” (71). Labelling a text as “YA” thus subordinates it to the formal genre that follows the label, a mere “‘colouring’ of genre” (Frow 73) rather than a distinct genre itself. That the primary classification of YAL is the audience for whom it is marketed rather than a defined set of formal characteristics further undermines arguments that might qualify it as a genre.

Thinking about YAL in this way—as a readership rather than a genre—has often resulted in relegating the field to the realm of “kiddie lit” or genre fiction (Crowe 121). In order to change these attitudes, Adam Bradford has called for shifting the defining characteristic of YAL away from audience, stating that “So long as young adult literature remains a classification, it will always have a weak voice among other classifications” (508). While this is a fair point, I’m not

sure I agree that the goal should be to legitimize YAL as "literary enough" for adults to pay attention to it—as a genre marketed to a specific readership, it should primarily function to engage that audience. This is especially true for children's and YA literatures, which are used to perform specific socializing or subversive functions. As a result, shifting the focus away from the target audience in order to achieve some adult standard of "legitimacy" undermines the very reason why YAL exists as a category in the first place.

Setting debates about genre based on audience aside, many scholars do consider YAL to be a legitimate genre with distinct formal, thematic, and rhetorical functions. Trites classifies YAL as a sub-genre of adolescent literature (i.e., literature featuring an adolescent protagonist) that emerged as a byproduct of postmodern thought (18). She argues that

> The Young Adult novel, then, came into being as a genre precisely because it is a genre predicated on demonstrating characters' ability to grow into an acceptance of their environment. That is, the YA novel teaches adolescents how to exist within the (capitalistically bound) institutions that necessarily define teenagers' existence. The YA novel allows for postmodern questions about authority, power, repression, and the nature of growth in ways that traditional *Bildungsromane* do not. (Trites 19)

This definition ascribes rhetorical and thematic characteristics to YA texts that make it distinct from other sub-genres of adolescent literature, including the bildungsroman.[14] While Trites' definition allows for interrogation of power structures, the ultimate ideological function of the YA novel is to interpellate youth into a capitalistic status quo. As such, the label "YA" does more than simply modify our expectations when reading a given genre; it constitutes a "complex genre"[15] with specific functions that draws formally on both named categories.

YAL can also be considered a genre as a product of what John Rieder calls the "mass cultural genre system," an historical system of genre classification that exists alongside and in relation to the classical genre system primarily used in the academy (1). The mass cultural genre system actively produces genres insofar as

> it names that fiction, in the first place, giving it visibility and constituting it as an object. The generic category subsequently acts as a matrix for communicating practices of writing and reading among artists, editors, and readers…involving them in ongoing debates about the genre's boundaries and protocols that feed back into artistic practices while constructing genealogies and canons of a 'selective tradition' subject to continual reinvention. (Rieder 10)

Thinking about the mass cultural genre system in relation to YAL makes clear that much of its development as a genre can be attributed to cultural and commercial forces in addition to the theoretical. As Frow asserts, "genre is not a property of a text but is a function of reading. Genre is a category that we impute to texts" (111). Because of the mass appeal of YAL, it is impossible to divorce market forces and the power of publishing labels from a definition of the genre.

Historically, several factors have made it difficult for YAL to be taken seriously as a field of study, including conflation of YAL with children's literature, the books' swiftly-outdated reflection of current youth culture, and the lack of a recognizable canon.[16] Much of the academic work in YA literature over the past decade has pushed to legitimize these texts as worthy of literary criticism, endorsing them as equal to "adult" literature in complexity and quality. Soter and Connors assert that "young adult literature has the kind of literary merit that canonical literature demonstrates" (66), while Jonathan Hunt lauds the literary YA crossover novel[17] as YAL's coming of age, arguing that with it, "young adult literature has matured into something

virtually indistinguishable from the best adult literary fiction" (147). From an academic standpoint, efforts to encourage more scholarship in the field of YA literature are needed in order to increase our understanding of individual texts as well as the educational outcomes of utilizing YA in classrooms. Again, however, I disagree that arguments based in "legitimacy" are the most effective way to achieve this. Instead, critics should work to evaluate YAL for what it is rather than attempt to apply frameworks more suited to adult/general fiction.

More recently, literacy research and pedagogy studies as well as increased literary criticism of YA texts have helped to move YAL more prominently into secondary and tertiary English curricula and serious academic inquiry (Petrone et al. 506-7). While the work that these and other scholars/educators have done to validate YAL as literary is important, the label itself also performs important rhetorical functions that set readerly expectations about textual characteristics and themes.

One of the hallmarks of YAL is its relevance to adolescent readers[18] (Stephens 41; Glaus 408; Ivey and Johnston 257). This means tackling the often-adult issues surrounding race, sexuality, gender, disability, and class in a way that adolescent readers find engaging. Often, authors achieve this engagement through a strong teen voice, a plot-driven narrative, and the inclusion of current cultural and linguistic trends. For the same reason, YA authors often experiment with nontraditional forms and content. Karen Coats expresses the importance of studying current trends in YAL content, which creates a "cultural dialogue regarding what we value and how our lives might be lived both responsibly and responsively in the face of increasing globalization, perspective altering technologies, and ideological challenge and change" (320). YAL books function as a critical site of entry into these dialogues for adolescent readers. As a result, YAL is often distinguished by a "politics of realism" that prepare youth for

the complexities of life by "address[ing] ethical concerns" of their lived experiences regardless of genre (e.g. fantasy, dystopian, realistic fiction) (Talley 231). This realism results in frank and often explicit depictions of drugs, sex, gendered/sexual/racial/self-violence, and poverty, which frequently result in campaigns for censorship and book banning by parents, churches, and schools (Lankford). The function of YAL thus demonstrates a fundamental paradox: that adolescents need to be educated in the realities of contemporary society in order to be contributing members of society, but they are simultaneously innocents in need of protection from those realities (Talley 232).

The consequence of this paradox in YA texts is that the genre by definition places adolescence at the center of the narrative. In terms of literary criticism, this focus on youth subjectivity provides a rich field of inquiry, particularly since the vast majority of YA novels are written for teens by adults.[19] As Kenneth Millard asserts, "Adolescents are important because of the ways in which they are at the forefront of social change, even while they are simultaneously the products of an adult social culture that shapes their development" (1). The history of Children's and Young Adult Literature is filled with didactic texts meant to shape young people into moral, thinking adults, and despite trends in YAL to eschew didacticism, the very fact that they remain texts written by adults for teens maintains this tension. Mary Hilton and Maria Nikolajeva make this clear:

> With few exceptions, as in all literature for children, Young Adult novels are written by adults, which means that they are in fact not about what it is to be an adolescent but are about what it might or should be, since, perhaps unconsciously, adults want to instruct young people and guide them into adulthood. Here in fiction, representations of

> adolescence are images of what adults want teenagers to believe about themselves and their lives. Hence it is a very powerful ideological tool. (8)

In other words, adolescence is a construct consisting of expectations and stereotypes defined and reinforced by adults rather than a set of qualities inherent in teenagers. Reynolds points out that YA writers participate in this process by creating texts that function as part of a "web of containment" that maintains the status quo or, conversely, as "a transformative medium, offering radical responses to culture" (77). As a result, she argues that YA fiction can be categorized into three broad classifications: "(1) books that trivialise adolescents, (2) nihilistic fiction, and (3) books that celebrate adolescent creativity and agency" (Reynolds 77). Because the first two categories function as webs of containment, I am most interested in texts that fall into the third category that see YA novels functioning as sites of transformative possibility, exploring new avenues for negotiating societal issues through the figure of the adolescent. From this perspective, YAL becomes a vehicle for reflecting upon and shaping societal hopes and fears for the future, and, as with any other kind of literature, should be evaluated for its impact on the larger cultural imaginary.

Based on this overview, there are several overarching generic traits that we might impute to a text designated "YAL":

YAL	
Audience	Adolescents
Author	Socializing agenda; responsible to readers
Purpose/Function	Interpellates youth into a specific ideology by acting as a "web of containment" or as a transformative medium that questions authority
Characteristic	Features an adolescent protagonist
Characteristic	Explores issues relevant to teens, including adult problems and societal trends
Characteristic	Engages questions about authority, power, and growth
Characteristic	Engages teen readers' interest via writing style and format

Figure 1. Overview of YA generic characteristics and function

While the traits outlined in Figure 1 are certainly not exhaustive, nor does every YA text exhibit every one of these characteristics, it does demonstrate that YAL functions effectively as a genre by setting reader expectations and embodying a discrete set of recognizable functions and characteristics. These generic traits are summed up by Johnathan Stephens, who argues that "the label "Young Adult" refers to a story that tackles the difficult, and oftentimes adult, issues that arise during an adolescent's journey toward identity, a journey told through a distinctly teen voice that holds the same potential for literary value as its 'Grownup' peers" (40-41). The act of further constituting YAL as a genre by labeling it as such also has important implications for the dissemination of these texts to youth readers.

Pacific Literature

The other important area to consider in beginning to define YALO is that of Pacific literature. In his introduction to *Nuanua,* Wendt outlines one of the key functions of this literature, which is that it "declares itself to be different from and opposed to colonial literature" ("Introduction" 3). Considering the history of written literature in Oceania, writing *about* the Pacific has been in steady production since the first European explorers wrote about their experiences in travel logs. These accounts were soon supplemented by missionary accounts of educating and proselytizing the "natives," closely followed by anthropologic work by Margaret Mead and others, and literary works from writers like Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jack London, and others. These works invariably forwarded a colonial perspective and agenda that laid the foundation for the physical overwriting of Indigenous ways of life to advance tourism, land speculation, militarism, colonial education systems, and other forms of Western governance. From a Pasifika perspective, colonial literature is characterized by misrepresentations, stereotypes, and objectification of Indigenous people (as exotic, noble, or as

subjects for scientific study) that "created a whole mythology about us" (Wendt, "Introduction" 2). As a result, an important function of Pacific literature is to generate representations of and by Pasifika peoples in order to convey Pacific-centered images of identity and culture that challenge inaccurate stereotypes. McDougall explains what this looks like from a Hawaiian perspective: "Because Kānaka Maoli are colonized people, nearly every example of our literary production, every rhetorical action – arguably, every effort to speak or write – disrupts the colonial ideological narrative and defies the severity of our colonial silencing" ("From Uē to Kū'ē" 52). In other words, as a literature that actively works to overturn colonial representations of Oceania, Pacific literature is inherently political and decolonial.

Pacific literature uses a variety of methods to enact its decolonial goals. These include "indigeni[zing] and enrich[ing] the language of the colonizers" and critiquing the effects of colonization (Wendt, "Introduction" 3). Another important decolonizing method employed by Pacific literature is the creative reconstitution of Indigenous oral literatures into writing (Winduo 2; Keown 179). These approaches seek to make Indigeneity visible within written texts in order to challenge notions of what a text can or should do. In *Nuanua*, Wendt is most interested in a Pacific literature that is focused on actively opposing colonial narratives and structures through direct critique. While this is certainly worthwhile, I think it's important to also acknowledge the decolonial power of self-affirmation that comes from seeing representations of story and culture in literature.

At odds with the cited decolonial power of Pacific literature is a recurring contradiction that comes in the form of audience and readership. As early as 1992, Subramani questioned the ability of the field to grow in any meaningful way if the majority of its readers are either non-Indigenous or Indigenous "educated elite" (23-25). Teresia Teaiwa echoed this concern in 2010,

declaring Pacific literature a "global literary backwater" and citing the depressing probability that Pacific novels would sell more copies in a year to university students taking literature courses than to the Pasifika readers who are ostensibly its primary audience (731). The unspoken suggestion in these articulations asks us to question the usefulness of a decolonial literature if it isn't read by the very people it is meant to empower. For Teaiwa, one explanation for why Pasifika peoples don't read is because Pacific literature's preoccupation with oral-to-print narratives about the genesis of the field ignores Indigenous visual and material literatures that also influence Pacific writing. Instead, she asks us to consider that

> the abundance of visual and material cultural production in precontact Pacific societies provides viable and legitimate antecedents to writing. Liberating Pacific literature from a singular and oral genealogical origin opens it up to multiple sources of inspiration and diverse forms of engagement. (731)

In other words, Teaiwa is arguing for a more expansive definition of Pacific literature that accounts for the complex influence of visual and other non-oral literatures. Such a project holds a great deal of promise for addressing issues of audience and readership mentioned previously, in addition to opening up additional avenues for the creation of new literary forms.

A final important function of Pacific literature is more concerned with the community situated in relation to the field than the literature itself. Marsh asserts that there is more to being a Pacific writer than simply writing.

> Using the process of tatauing the (postcolonial) body, Wendt aligns the author with the tufuga ta tatau, the practitioner of tatau, casting them as a type of inscriber and go-between negotiator and translator of existing texts, signs and images.…Regardless of

> whether one is an author or critic, the constant is the exhortation: "'ia teu le va' – cherish, nurse, care for the va, the relationships." (Marsh, "The Body" 2-3)

In other words, the field of Pacific literature forms a community based on relationships that come with responsibilities for both writers and scholars. She argues that these responsibilities include service to Pasifika communities, exposing Pasifika youth to Pacific literature, and supporting Pasifika writers attempting to publish their work ("The Body" 3-4). In shifting definitions of Pacific literature to include authorial responsibility, Marsh enacts Indigenous values of reciprocity and community as necessary elements of Pacific literary production.

In Figure 2, I briefly list some of the characteristics and functions of Pacific literature from the discussion in this section. This chart is meant to function as a broad overview rather than as a definitive list.

Pacific Literature	
Audience	Pacific Islanders, but in practice settlers and Indigenous educated elites
Author	Decolonizing agenda; responsible to community
Purpose/Function	Decolonize
Characteristic	Reverses colonial narratives and representations
Characteristic	Focuses on Indigenous issues in Oceania
Characteristic	Critiques colonial institutions
Characteristic	Indigenizes colonizer languages; creative story adaptation

Figure 2. Overview of characteristics and function of Pacific literature

In the remainder of the section, I outline some of the considerations at stake in expanding definitions of Pacific literary production beyond authorship to include the writing of settler allies. Ultimately, I argue that inclusivity can be a useful way to accelerate decolonial projects in Oceania.

When it comes to defining Pacific literature, the primary generic issue is "what counts as a Pacific text?" To this day, representations of Oceania continue to be produced by outsiders, often with significant negative consequences for Pasifika peoples.[20] In order to counter these

portrayals, most definitions of Pacific literature center around authorship rather than theme, defining the field through texts written *by* Indigenous Pacific Islanders (Subramani, *South Pacific*; Wendt, "Introduction" 2). One of the reasons that Pacific literature is considered to have found its genesis in the 1960s is because the Indigenous writers of that time "imagined Oceania against the historical background of colonialism and independence," reflecting "a growing regional consciousness linked to an Oceanic literary and cultural formation opposed to colonial impositions" (Subramani, "Oceanic Imaginary" 150). Writing from a place of marginality enforced by colonial structures, Indigenous writers continue to contribute to Pacific literature as a way to articulate their experiences and decolonial agendas.

While I agree with the rationale behind defining Pacific literature based on authorship by Indigenous Pacific Islanders, it can lead to the conceptualization of a Western/Indigenous binary that does not leave room for settler writing that is also decolonial. In fact, much of the literature by non-Indigenous writers is the product of other minority groups brought to the region as a result of colonization. For example, Indo-Fijians brought in as indentured servants from India in the 18th century make up nearly half of the population in Fiji ("Population and Demography"), while much of Hawai'i's population consists of the descendants of Asian settlers brought in throughout the 19th and 20th centuries to work on pineapple and sugar plantations (Fujikane 5). Even works by Indigenous Pacific writers in the region can be considered settler texts, since the diasporic reality of Pacific Islanders means that many live in countries other than their own home islands. In fact, a large number of Pasifika writers today write from diasporic spaces, more often than not a result of colonial and globalizing forces that compel Indigenous peoples to leave their homelands and settle elsewhere. All of these groups have contributed to literary production in the region that is distinctly non-Western as well as decolonial.

That being said, shifting away from a focus on authorship to a definition of Pacific literature based on a colonial/decolonial binary should be carefully negotiated, because decolonial settler writers in the Pacific do not always support or even acknowledge Indigenous movements for sovereignty and land reclamation. As Tuck and Yang point out, "settlers are diverse - there are white settlers and brown settlers, and peoples in both groups make moves to innocence that attempt to deny and deflect their own complicity in settler colonialism" (10). In other words, what settler writers, scholars, and teachers mean by "decolonization" may not always align with Indigenous calls for literal decolonization. Literary production in Hawai'i provides a good example of why a clearer definition of decolonization is necessary if we want to expand definitions of Pacific literature beyond authorship. Important Japanese American writers in Hawai'i like Milton Murayama and Lois Ann Yamanaka are celebrated for decolonizing literature in English through their use of HCE, but their work rarely engages with the ways Asian settler agendas harm Kānaka Maoli communities. Morris Young notes that "there is an advantage for non-Hawaiians who claim Hawai'i as their home to participate in the emerging political and cultural awareness of Native Hawaiians—it is 'in'" to be Hawaiian today. But what advantage is there for Native Hawaiians for such a coalition to exist?" (94). Currently, without a differentiation between "Hawaiian" and "Local" classifications for literature, settler or "Local" narratives of a pan-ethnic melting pot overwhelm Native Hawaiian perspectives. As Candace Fujikane points out, the focus of these narratives on a "diverse" or "multicultural" Hawai'i "as the triumphant 'resolution' to Hawai'i's colonial 'past'…ignore[s] Hawaiians' ongoing struggles for self-determination as well as the tremendous political power some Asian groups have used against Hawaiians" (*Asian Settler Colonialism* 3). Because the label of "Hawaiian literature" has historically been used to forward representations of Hawai'i that objectify and marginalize

Native Hawaiians, ʻŌiwi scholars like hoʻomanawanui and McDougall necessarily define Hawaiian literature based on Indigenous authorship in order to reclaim the label as one that empowers Kānaka Maoli.[21] Similar tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous literary production also manifest in other areas of Oceania, notably Fiji and Aotearoa, where Indo-Fijian and Pasifika writing can overshadow or obscure Kaiviti (Indigenous Fijian) and Māori literatures.

Acknowledging the ongoing tensions between Indigenous and settler literary production in Oceania provides an opening for moving beyond limiting (but justified!) definitions of Pacific literature based solely on authorship. Clearly defining "decolonial" Pacific literature as aligned with Indigenous agendas allows for an expanded conceptualization of Pacific literature that can productively include work by settler allies, which I assert is an important step to achieving true decolonization. As Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua reminds us, "both settler and Indigenous people must take part in dismantling the structures that prohibit sustainable Indigenous self-determination and caring for lands upon which all depend for life" (149). While focusing on authorship plays a critical role in ensuring that Indigenous voices are heard, the onus for decolonization should not be placed solely upon the colonized; settlers who acknowledge their culpability and support decolonization efforts should also contribute to the work.

For these reasons, I include considerations of textual function in addition to authorship when defining Pacific literature. This function is necessarily decolonial and focused on Indigenous concerns. Rob Wilson theorizes that Pacific literature performs a two-fold interactive and "creative dialectic" that entails what he terms processes of "decreation and recreation" (1). Decreation comprises "the articulation of an engaged process of decolonization, critical negation, and culture-based resistance to forces of global belittlement and symbolic effacement," while

recreation "involves the ongoing rehabilitation, affirmation, and cultural-political strengthening of the indigenous and local imaginations that are struggling to be heard and link up inside the Pacific" (Wilson 2). In other words, Pacific literature illuminates and seeks to dismantle settler colonial structures while building Indigenous networks. Importantly, "rehabilitation" must center upon "the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" as decolonization "is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools" (Tuck and Yang 1). This definition allows for the privileging of Indigenous literary production while also including texts that are written by settler allies that perform the specific functions of decreation and recreation.

Young Adult Literatures of Oceania

Existing at the nexus of both YAL and Pacific literature, the ʻafakasi nature of YALO draws on the creative potential of both literatures in order to do the important work of engaging Oceanic youth in decolonization and Indigenous resurgence projects. In this section, I tease out some of the major points of compatibility and tension between the two literatures, which are visually represented in Figure 3 in order to show how YALO functions as a new ʻafakasi genre with a unique set of possibilities. As the green heading shows, YALO is capable of expressing all of the traits of YAL and Pacific literature, which visually represents the expansiveness and inclusivity of the new ʻafakasi framework. Items listed in the middle column (under YALO) represent the overlap between YAL and Pacific literature, and thus the unique third space occupied by YALO.

	YALO		
	YAL		Pacific Literature
Audience	Adolescents	Pasifika Youth	Pacific Islanders, but in practice settlers and Indigenous educated elites
Author	Socializing agenda; responsible to readers	Decolonial socializing agenda; responsible to readers as community	Decolonizing agenda; responsible to community
Purpose/ Function	Interpellate youth into a specific ideology by acting as a "web of containment" or as a transformative medium	Interpellates youth into decolonial ideology	Decolonize
Characteristic	Features an adolescent protagonist	Reverses colonial representations of adolescence	Reverses colonial narratives and representations
Characteristic	Explores issues relevant to teens, including adult problems and societal trends	Makes Indigenous issues in Oceania relevant for teens	Focuses on Indigenous issues in Oceania
Characteristic	Engages questions about authority, power, and growth	Explores colonial structures of power	Critiques colonial institutions
Characteristic	Engages teen readers' interest via writing style and format	Engages teen readers' interest through creative language and story adaptation	Indigenizes colonizer languages; creative story adaptation

Figure 3. Characteristics and Function of YALO

As Figure 3 shows, YALO is capable of engaging general adolescent and Pasifika audiences well as settler readers, but the point of overlap between YAL and Pacific literature appropriately positions Pasifika youth as the primary audience for this literature. It also positions YALO authors to adopt decolonial purposes for their readership, and importantly, to take responsibility for the narratives that they craft as having consequences for both individual readers and the community. The primary point of tension and negotiation is present in the Purpose/Function row, and reflects a disconnect between YA and Pacific literature: namely, that

Pacific literature is always already oriented towards decolonial purposes, but YAL (as a literature created by adults for children) can just as easily reinforce the status quo as transform it. I anticipate this conflict manifesting in YALO texts that might seem decolonial on the surface, but ultimately end up reinforcing or maintaining colonial structures of power. This conflict presents YALO authors and readers with the opportunity to identify texts, individuals, and institutions where this conflict manifests as a site of struggle that should be engaged and negotiated. Finally, note that the YALO column for the four rows of characteristics aligns with the major points of analysis that I engage in this dissertation project; while my two main categories of inquiry are representations of adolescence (chapter 2) and creative adaptation of Indigenous story (chapter 3), both chapters also discuss how YALO explores colonial structures of power and makes Indigenous issues relevant for teens.

In choosing to define YALO according to these characteristics, I am deliberately centering Pasifika youth and Indigenous issues while allowing for the inclusion of settler youth allies. As a marginalized subgenre, YALO holds increased subversive power because of its low profile. Kuwada calls for an expansion into "mundane" forms of art in order to encompass wider audiences (111). He argues that mundane/pop culture art forms are powerful sites for resistance because they aren't considered "literary" by most critics, claiming that "the marginal and 'harmless' status accorded to non-elite art forms is the very thing that enables us to use these forms and styles to…infiltrate public consciousness" and "disseminate our culture and identity to both outsiders and our own people alike" (Kuwada 112). While Kuwada focuses on comics as an example of a mundane form with this kind of "powerful marginality," I would argue that YALO also fits the bill.

YAL has historically been conflated with children's literature or considered genre fiction (e.g. romance, detective, westerns, scifi), with literary critics and adult audiences alike dismissing it as "kiddie lit" or "leisure reading" and failing to take it seriously. Thomas Bean similarly notes the subversive potential of YALO, asserting that YA lit featuring the Other is an important alternative to the canon and challenges notions of insider-outsider (28). He further notes the importance of Local and Indigenous contributions to the field, as "young adult literature situated in Hawai'i and other aboriginal settings offers a rich site for critical literacy and the examination of the balance of power" while challenging idealized narratives of the islands marketed for outside consumption (Bean 29). Bean's argument that "localized" YALO in Hawai‘i can function as a site of resistance underscores the potential of and need for a larger body of Oceanic YAL written for and by Indigenous and minority communities.

I would like to review several other important aspects of YALO and its place within the larger field of literary production in Oceania. Long points out that Pacific children's literature (and by extension, YALO) is an important site for the publication of literature in Indigenous vernacular languages (231); it is similarly a rich site of adaptations and retellings of traditional myths, legends, and Indigenous histories (236), but rather than simply retell them (as children's literature does) or use them metaphorically/symbolically (as is common in adult texts), YALO texts tend to integrate them literally into the fabric of the narrative, with mythic figures becoming characters in their own right. A good example of this is the character of Kanaloa, Hawaiian god of the sea, who is a character in Lehua Parker's Niuhi Shark Saga. While this trend is fraught with the dangers of misrepresentation, it also holds a great deal of potential for exposing youth to Indigenous beliefs and spirituality, especially taking into account the importance of realism in the genre.

Importantly, children's and YA literatures are also crucial in accurately contextualizing the gender dynamics of Oceanic literary production; Long warns that "there is a further, insidious effect of ignoring that part of our literature that is written for children: it suppresses the true role of Pacific Islands women writers" (232). He points out that most writers of children's literature are women (the same holds true for YALO), and that they produce more books per year than male writers (Long 231). Paying attention to these larger dynamics of what gets published and by whom allows us to create a more accurate mapping of the power dynamics of literary production in the field of Oceanic literature.

Tracing the Emergence of YALO

Like any new literature, YALO owes much of its existence to a significant number of progenitor texts; in fact, as *Miss Ulysses* demonstrates, Pacific literatures have featured adolescent protagonists throughout the history of the field, and many of these texts comprise the genealogical foundation from which YALO later develops. In this section, I provide an overview of Oceanic texts that center adolescents and adolescence from the 1970s to the present in order to show how literary trends in the region have culminated in the emergence of YALO. While most of the early texts fall under the broader category of adolescent literature, the overview reveals a general trajectory of themes and generic qualities that have influenced the development of texts that might be considered YALO today.

The 1970s-1980s

Aside from their crucial importance in the development of Pacific literature as a whole, these two decades produced key texts about adolescence that underscore the importance of young people in decolonization efforts and the recovery of Indigenous knowledges and values. One of the first novels to be published during this era, Vincent Eri's *The Crocodile* (1970) fits

firmly in the category of a coming of age novel through its tracing of Hoiri Sevese's development as a Papuan child in a colonial educational system, including his experiences with various colonial institutions including the church, military, and government as he reaches adulthood. Wendt's *Sons for the Return Home* (1973) likewise features the protagonist's experiences as a young Samoan immigrant in Aotearoa New Zealand navigating Western schooling and racial discrimination. In Hawai'i, Holt explores the cultural and spiritual identity conflicts that arise for mixed-race Kānaka Maoli[22] through the teen hapa-haole[23] character Mark Hull in *Waimea Summer* (1976). Like most Pacific literature from this era, these texts are critical of the outcomes of colonization on Indigenous Pacific Islanders, and much of their narrative power is drawn from their representations of young characters grappling with identity conflicts.

The 1980s saw the publication of important texts by Māori writers, including Patricia Grace's *Potiki* (1986) and Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (1987), which are both primarily narrated by adults, but center around the experiences of spiritually gifted adolescents—Toko and Kaha—who become leaders in their communities. Ngahuia te Awekotuku's *Tahuri* (1989) powerfully establishes the direction that adolescent literature would take in the following years through a series of often-dark vignettes following several young Māori girls experiencing cultural and sexual awakenings within the context of colonial New Zealand. These novels clearly establish the critical role of adolescents in Indigenous decolonization movements, including concerns about education, land rights, and cultural continuity that continue to be portrayed as relevant in later texts.

Non-Indigenous minority literature from this era likewise draws on adolescence as a vehicle for addressing settler subjectivities in Oceania. In Milton Murayama's important Hawai'i plantation novel *All I Asking for is my Body* (1975), the relationships between the adolescent

Japanese characters Kiyoshi, his brother Toshio, and the other plantation camp youth form the backbone of cultural and identity exploration. Murayama's unapologetic use of HCE also sets a precedent for later works that underscore the importance of language in adolescent identity politics. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the novels of prolific children's/YA author Margaret Mahy began exploring the place of pākehā[24] adolescents in Māori spaces, perhaps in response to increasing political and legal powers granted to the Waitangi Tribunal and the ongoing Māori Renaissance (Winters 408). Sarah Winters points out that

> the fate of Mahy's adolescent Pakeha heroes is decided by meetings with Maori in Maori space….Mahy's adolescents [uncover] the hidden workings of their county and, especially, of their families, thus blending public and private as well as European and Maori….They are newcomers, both to space (as Pakeha in a Maori land) and time (as young people entering into history). (410)

While Mahy's novels during this period continue to center settler concerns and perspectives, by acknowledging the tensions inherent in settler presence on Indigenous land they mark an important shift in asking young pākehā to consider their positionality in relation to Māori. Taken together, these novels represent early glimmers of settler writing that acknowledges the need to do decolonial work.

The 1990s

Literary works featuring adolescent protagonists in the 1990s constitute a transformative shift towards the development of YALO. Here, more than in any previous decade, the influence of YAL becomes more pronounced, particularly in the appearance of more books written and/or marketed explicitly for adolescent readers. During this decade, writers experimented more than

ever before with form and language use, from mixed-genre writing in dialect to the adaptation of oral literary forms into print.

In Hawai‘i, texts featuring Hawai’i Creole English (HCE), or Pidgin,[25] became standard fare, starting in 1990 with Darrell Lum’s *Pass on, No Pass Back* and closely followed by the adolescent-voiced poetry and prose of Lois Ann Yamanaka. R. Zamora Linmark’s *Rolling the R’s* (1995) likewise gave an important voice to the experiences of Filipino youth navigating culture, education, and sexuality in urban Honolulu. These and other prominent texts like Graham Salisbury’s *Blue Skin of the Sea* (1992) and Yamanaka’s *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theater* (1993) garnered national and international attention, helping to establish a subversive literature that “treats linguistic difference and marginalization as valuable traits, turning normative categories of standard English and status on their heads” (Bean 29). The publication of *Growing Up Local: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose from Hawai‘i* (1998) marked another important milestone in the establishment of Local literature and the celebration of Pidgin language, which is made all the more interesting through the anthology’s focus on childhood and adolescence. These texts identify the 1990s as an important decade for Local literary production, particularly in terms of portraying language and culture in Hawai‘i.

Elsewhere in the Pacific, Indigenous authors experimented more freely with decolonial representations of language, tone, and form in their writing. Joseph Veramo’s *Moving Through the Streets* (1994) takes an unapologetic look at how young Fijians in Suva negotiate urban living, while Robert Sullivan’s *Maui: Legends of the Outcast* (1996) adapts Māori stories of the demigod Maui into a mature graphic novel, in keeping with the increasing popularity of the form within the broader field of YAL. The middle of the decade also marked the impactful arrival of Sia Figiel’s *Girl in the Moon Circle* (1996) and *Where We Once Belonged* (1996), which won a

Commonwealth Writer's Prize for its portrayal of the experiences of Samoan girls growing up in a rural village. Both novels freely intermix English with Samoan language, and experimentally adapt oral literary forms into print. Patricia Grace's *Cousins* (1998) likewise traces the coming of age of three girl cousins growing up Māori in the colonized spaces of Aotearoa New Zealand. In many ways, these texts reflect larger efforts to celebrate Pacific literature as decolonial in both narrative and form.

Considering the continued popularity of series fiction in YA and the existence of several YALO series, it is important to note moves to create Hawai'i-based series fiction near the end of the 90s and into the early 2000s. Island Heritage published its "Adventures in Hawaii" series by a variety of local authors, while Bess Press released "Diamond Head High" novels along with the supernatural "Hawaii Chillers" series, which reads like a Local version of Scholastic's popular "Goosebumps" series by R.L. Stine. These early attempts at introducing regional series fiction in response to the popularity of mainstream versions reflects an increased awareness of adolescent reading habits, including an increased demand for local narratives that addressed teen subjectivities.

As these examples illustrate, the literary output of this decade established the importance of providing a broad range of literature for young readers, emphasizing a multiplicity of voices and reflecting the vast spectrum of experiences that Oceanic youth represent.

The 2000s

Literary production at the beginning of the new millennium continued to build on the diversity established in the 1990s, notably with an increased focus on perspectives and concerns related to Indigenous youth. It is in the 2000s that YALO texts begin to emerge in significant

numbers, responding to a need for literature that reflects the subjectivities of Oceanic youth as well as an increased number of opportunities for youth to express their own experiences.

During this time period, Indigenous literature with decolonial themes starts to be specifically targeted to adolescent readers. Witi Ihimaera's *Sky Dancer* (2004) entwines Māori mythology with the story of contemporary Skylark O'Shea through time travel and a battle between land and sea birds that functions as an allegory of pākehā colonization of Aotearoa (Alessio 260). Similarly drawing on spiritual elements, Matthew Kaopio's influential novella *Written in the Sky* (2005) follows homeless Kanaka Maoli teen ʻĪkauikalani as he learns to thrive in the urban landscape of Honolulu by embodying Hawaiian cultural and spiritual practices despite his displacement from family and land. Also set in Hawaiʻi, Lurline McGregor's *Between the Deep Blue Sea and Me* asks protagonist Moana Kawelo to choose between a comfortable life on the mainland and her ancestral responsibilities to land and family. Jacinta Galeaʻi's chapbook *Aching for Mango Friends* (2006) describes the linguistic, social, and cultural struggles of a Samoan teen who moves from Samoa to Washington state to stay with relatives in order to get an American education. These texts reflect accessible tone, language, and style that helps youth readers to grasp decolonial themes.

Writing by non-Indigenous writers also contributed to discussions about a wide range of Indigenous issues during this time period. Reflecting increased political activism by Hawaiians seeking sovereignty from the United States, Clemence McLaren's *Dance for the ʻĀina* (2002) follows hapa-haole teen Kate Kahele's journey to understand her Hawaiian heritage through hula and activism. Dorothea Buckingham's historical fiction novel *My Name is Loa* (2003) highlights the trauma experienced by young leprosy patients torn from their families and sent into exile on the island of Molokaʻi beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. R. Kikuo Johnson's graphic

novel *Night Fisher* (2005) explores Hawai‘i’s underworld of drugs and crime from the perspective of prep schooler Loren Foster, with a sustained subtext of the novel linking Kānaka Maoli drug abuse to Indigenous land dispossession and colonial politics. These novels illustrate an important shift in writing that might begin to be considered settler ally writing.

Importantly, the 2000s also saw a great deal of activity in the realm of poetry centering Indigenous youth experiences throughout the Pacific. In addition to Galea‘i’s chapbook, poems in Tusiata Avia’s collections *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt* (2004) and *Bloodclot* (2009) give a distinctly youthful voice to mixed-race Samoan girls living in Aotearoa, while poetry by McDougall in *The Salt-Wind: Ka Makani Pa‘akai* (2008) also portrays experiences of growing up as a Hawaiian in the colonized state that is Hawai‘i. Organized performance poetry groups by and for youth also emerge during this period, most notably in Youth Speaks Hawai‘i, founded in 2006, and the South Auckland Poets Collective in 2008. Both groups focus on developing youth voices through poetry, including slam poetry, and many participants have gone on to publish their work and perform in national and international poetry slams. Representations of adolescence in poetry demonstrate a deep engagement with identity, especially when adolescents themselves are part of the writing process.

During this decade, groundbreaking anthologies of poetry and short fiction centered around childhood and adolescent experiences gave publication opportunities to a new generation of young writers in Oceania. The first, *Niu Waves* (2001), was published as an outgrowth of the Niu Wave Writer’s Collective, which was established in Suva, Fiji in 1995. A second collection edited by Marsh, *Niu Voices* (2005), celebrates the emergence of “a new generation of writers emerging from the Pacific diaspora in Aotearoa New Zealand” (Marsh, “Nafanua” 220). The collection features writers with ancestral ties throughout Oceania, including Kiribati, Wallis and

Futuna, Tuvalu, Tonga, Niue, and the Cook Islands, and has been used widely as a textbook in secondary and tertiary classrooms. *Chamoru Childhood* (2008) is another important anthology that features Chamorro coming of age experiences through poetry and short fiction. All three volumes explore issues of mixed-race identity, language and culture loss, diaspora, and the effects of colonization on adolescents and their development. The emergence of anthologies focusing on the experiences of children and adolescence signals the development of communities interested in exploring youth subjectivities in Oceania.

2010-present

Within the last ten years YALO has bloomed into a dynamic and popular genre that exhibits prominent features of both YAL and Pacific literature. Several new developments have contributed to the genre's popularity among youth and adult readers in the region, and also provide rich avenues for analysis. A major contribution to the proliferation of YALO texts in recent years is the availability of online self-publishing, which has allowed many authors to write and disseminate texts despite being unable to secure traditional publishing deals. Leading this group is Lani Wendt Young and her paranormal romance Telesā Series, which took the online Pasifika community by storm in 2011. As affordable e-books, Young's series (with the help of online marketing and social media sharing) has reached a broad diasporic audience (Tapaleao). Other successful self-published works include Lehua Parker's Hawai'i-based Niuhi Shark Saga (2012-2016) and Sieni A.M.'s Samoa-based e-books *Illumine Her* (2013) and *Scar of the Bamboo Leaf* (2014). The emergence of these books represents a shift in literary production that is less reliant on traditional avenues for creating, disseminating, or accessing literature in Oceania. As such, it opens up possibilities for a greater number of Pasifika writers to share their own voices through literature.

Another significant shift is the proliferation of fantastical texts that intermix Oceanic histories and cultural heroes with contemporary landscapes and characters. In addition to Young's adaptation of Samoan spirit women (teine sā) in the Telesā Series and Parker's incorporation of shape-shifting shark deities and the akua (god) Kanaloa in the Niuhi Shark Saga, Karen Healey's *Guardian of the Dead* (2010) is full of magical beings as well as spiritual entities and gods, most notably Hine-nui-te-po, the Māori goddess of death. Jen Angeli's *Kino and the King* (2016) magically transports contemporary teen Kino back to the mid-nineteenth century, where she embarks on an epic quest with the soon-to-be Kamehameha III to find mana-filled items that will heal her ailing grandfather. In each case, the fantastical elements of the stories serve to illuminate and animate Indigenous culture and history for young readers.

Despite the increasing popularity of fantastic narratives in YALO, realistic fiction remains an important category. *Attitude 13* (2010) is short story collection by Tanya Chargualaf Taimanglo that traces the identity struggles of a mixed-race Chamorro girl both in Guam and as a young college student in California. Novels such as Tyler Miranda's *'Ewa Which Way* (2012) and *Bugs* (2013) by Whiti Hereaka provide unapologetic representations of the daily realities of youth in Oceania dealing with issues of poverty, dysfunctional families, stereotypes, and racism. In Figiel's *Freelove* (2015), Inosia grapples with the powerful attraction she feels for her high school science teacher, who leads her through an intense intellectual, sexual, and spiritual awakening. Historical fiction likewise remains significant, providing insight into earlier time periods such as in Stephen Tenorio's portrayal of late nineteenth century Guåhan in *Ocean in a Cup* (2012), or by providing accessible narratives about the lives of important historical figures, as David Kāwika Eyre does in *Kamehameha: The Rise of a King* (2013). These novels take the

world seriously, giving teens a greater understanding of history even as they provide models for navigating their own lived realities.

Graphic novels and comics are also much more prevalent, taking both historical and fantastical approaches to storytelling. Notable contributions include Stacey Hayashi and Damon Wong's *Journey of Heroes* (2012), which tells the story of the decorated Japanese 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat team during World War II; *Meariki: The Quest for Truth* (2014) by Helen Pearse-Otene and Andrew Burdan, which illustrates the epic journey of Meariki, a quick-witted young Māori slave sent to rescue her chief's daughter from the evil Tānekikiwa; and *Ngārara Huarau* (2016) by Maxine Hemi, the story of a taniwha's[26] travels across the Aotearoa landscape. As examples of visual literature, these works represent an important avenue for exploring the intersections between youth culture, contemporary art, and Pacific visual and material literatures.

The proliferation of YALO within the past decade represents an increasingly diverse array of linguistic, cultural, and generic offerings that are also increasingly decolonial. Excitingly, these trends are likely to continue as publishing methods become more and more accessible.

Conclusion

Ultimately, because of its marginalized position, YALO is not likely to produce works that are recognized as "literary" enough to increase the prestige of Oceanic literature within the broader fields of world literatures or even U.S. or Commonwealth literatures; in the current scholarly climate, these texts are not likely to garner much critical acclaim unless they are categorized as adult literature (which, ironically, strips them of much of their subversive power). Because they are meant to be read and understood by younger audiences with shorter attention

spans and less reading experience, they are also less likely to achieve some of the complex and often-ambiguous metaphorical and generic layering of meaning and form that are present in novels produced by acclaimed Pacific writers like Wendt or Grace. A notable exception is Sia Figiel, whose complex novel *Freelove* should be considered a crossover YAL novel. For similar reasons, they are also much less likely to successfully achieve the complexities and nuance offered by satire, a commonly used form of political and cultural critique in Indigenous Oceanic communities. That being said, the contribution of YALO to Pacific literatures is overwhelmingly positive and represents a significant opportunity for invigorating and strengthening the field. The continued growth of an ever-broadening range of YALO texts is an exciting development for Pacific literature as a whole, as these texts represent the fastest-growing segment of novels and graphic novels in a field traditionally dominated by poetry and short fiction.

CHAPTER TWO: REPRESENTATIONS OF ADOLESCENCE

In Sia Figiel's 2016 novel *Freelove*, the protagonist Inosia frequently reminds readers through inner and outer dialogue that she happens to be seventeen and a half years old. At first read, the continual emphasis on her being not-quite-eighteen seems odd, until it turns out that a large portion of the plot revolves around a consensual sexual liaison between Inosia and her much-older science teacher, Mr. Ioage Viliamu. Figiel portrays Inosia as extremely intelligent, mature, and fully capable of making her own decisions. When Ioage expresses regret about his role in their liaison, Inosia takes full responsibility for her own sexual choices, telling him,

> "You didn't rape me."
>
> "But I deflowered you."
>
> "And what's my place in this deflowering ceremony?...Don't flatter yourself, mister."
>
> (Figiel, *Freelove* 171)

While the novel primarily revolves around issues concerning sexuality, religion, culture, and agency, Figiel's emphasis on Inosia's age allows her to complicate these issues by challenging the very notion of adolescence itself as a construct based on legal age.

Figiel's representation of Inosia underscores one of the difficulties in defining YALO by its readership: what is meant by adolescence in the Western sense of the word can vary quite drastically from culture to culture. In this chapter, I argue that YALO authors construct a new 'afakasi representation of adolescence and adolescents that negotiates Indigenous and Western conceptions while also being inclusive of the subjectivity of settler youth. This new 'afakasi identity rejects stereotypes of Pasifika youth, allowing them to embrace the conflicting aspects of their identity in order to develop self-worth, confidence, and build community. I first outline common representations of adolescence and adolescents in Oceania, followed by a discussion of

how representations of youth in literature can work to challenge stereotypes and build self-esteem. Finally, I examine specific YALO novels to show how adolescence and adolescents are portrayed as a way to undermine stereotypes about Pasifika youth through positive representation.

Representations of Adolescence and Adolescents in Oceania

Youth studies scholars underscore the difficulty of defining adolescence as a distinct phase of development. Andy Furlong defines youth as

> a period of semi-dependence that falls between the full dependency that characterizes childhood and the independence of adulthood. Defined this way, it is clear that youth is constructed differently across time and between societies. In some societies young people become independent at a relatively young age, while in others dependency can last well into their second decade of life, and even beyond. (3)

Western constructions of adolescence, particularly in the United States, emerged as a result of urban-industrializing forces that increased wealth and leisure time, allowing children to continue schooling throughout their teens (Fasick). Along with the invention of high school, legal age designations for adolescents as minors dependent on their parents came into play.

In Oceania, defining adolescence by a designated audience age range becomes complicated because Indigenous cultures do not usually mark legal rights by age (e.g. under 18 classified as "minor/dependent" and 18th birthdate as automatic "adulthood"). For example, in Samoa, cultural acceptance of adulthood in the village comes through undergoing the process of receiving a tatau—pe'a for men and malu for women—which "show[s] you are ready for life, for adulthood and service to your community, that you have triumphed over physical pain and are now ready to face the demands of life" (Wendt, "Afterword" 400). In other words, numerical age

is not of great importance—individuals' cultural knowledge, commitment, and maturity level mark them as adults. That being said, many Western designations of adolescence are nonetheless present in Oceania and its diasporas as a result of colonizing forces and popular youth culture influences. Consequently, adolescence in Oceania, in addition to being an 'afakasi age designation, is often also an 'afakasi cultural, religious, and legal negotiation between various amalgamations of Western and Indigenous conceptualizations of adolescence.

Much of the discourse surrounding adolescence in pop culture, education, and literature portrays a negative youth culture in which teens are presented as irrational, emotional, rebellious, or irresponsible. Sarigianides et al. describe how in English teacher training, "Through phrases such as *identity crisis, teenage brain,* and *raging hormones*…we learned to expect moody, risk-taking, unpredictable, and peer-oriented adolescents" (13). These stereotypes have material consequences that "inform how young people are worried over, administered, talked about, advocated for, and arranged in settings, including in public schools and in relation to texts intended for their consumption" (Petrone et al. 510). The stakes are even higher for young people of color, who are often not afforded the same level of forgiveness for "typical" adolescent behaviors as their white peers. Groenke et al. explain that

> discourses [about adolescents]—and their attendant definitions of "normalcy" for teenagers—get unevenly distributed for youth of color. As an example, when youth of color "resist" or "rebel against" the status quo in or outside of school, they become criminals—"public enemies," "menaces to society." Similarly, youth of color don't have "normal" curiosities about sex or natural sex drives; instead they are "hypersexual," oversexed, their desires base and carnal. And youth of color don't have peer groups or caring adults in their lives: they have gangs. (36)

Similar trends exist in Oceania, where stereotypes about Pasifika youth often position them as academic underachievers, violent, or as objects of touristic and/or athletic voyeurism. In reality, the Pasifika youth population is more threatened than threatening, in critical need of positive representation and intervention in education, mental and physical health outcomes, and identity and self-esteem. Region-wide statistics identify high rates of delinquency, violence, substance abuse, and suicide in populations of Pasifika youth, who often live in poverty (Trinidad 489). Pacific Islander youth are also more likely to be involved in gangs and overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, including prisons (Nakhid 112; Vakalahi & Godinet 230). In addition to being manifestations of larger colonial systems of oppression, I assert that many of these outcomes are also a result of negative representations of Pasifika youth compounded with a lack of understanding of their ‘afakasi cultural identities.

Pasifika youth often struggle because they are asked to assimilate into Western ideological structures, and yet are simultaneously expected to maintain their Indigenous identities. Vilsoni Hereniko explains that a new ‘afakasi approach to identity is one way for Pasifika youth to move past this false dilemma:

> They feel Pacific yet speak English [and] wear Western clothing. Torn between being traditional and being realistic, they are often unable to reconcile these seemingly conflicting notions of identity. A way out of the impasse is to realize that there is nothing shameful about having two or more identities, or an identity that is a composite of multiple cultural backgrounds. In fact...the individual who is competent in two or more languages or cultures has a distinct advantage. (Hereniko 150)

Fortunately, despite continuing negative outcomes for Pasifika youth, many are deciding to embrace their ‘afakasi identities. This development is most striking in Aotearoa New Zealand,

where a vibrant Pasifika youth culture demonstrates that in many ways "It has become hip to be brown…with influential Pacific people in music, media, and sports, in addition to a growing presence in education and politics" (Marsh, "Pasifika Poetry" 198). YALO contributes to these positive representations, reinforcing positive popular culture images of talented Pasifika youth.

Positive representations of Pasifika youth are important for everyone in Oceania. Settler youth, in particular, have much to gain from seeing positive portrayals of Pasifika youth. As settlers, many hold on to attitudes learned from their parents and dominant culture that Tuck and Yang identify as "settler moves to innocence," or "a set of evasions…that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity" (1).[27] In addition to being learned attitudes, they also arise as a result of negative media portrayals and a lack of education and/or awareness of Indigenous issues. As Chris Crowe asserts, "unless they're provided opportunities, even vicarious ones, to get to know people from various cultures, their narrow-minded notions and prejudices might remain with them into adulthood" (125). YALO is a powerful vehicle for providing "vicarious opportunities" for settler youth to shift biases, learn about Indigenous issues, and potentially become settler allies.

It is in this potential to begin the process of helping settler youth to learn how to become allies that YALO becomes most valuable beyond its primary Pasifika audience. Within the context of Hawai'i, Goodyear-Kā'ōpua asserts that settlers "can take responsibility for and develop attachment to lands upon which they reside when actively supporting Kānaka Maoli who have been alienated from ancestral lands to reestablish those connections and also helping to rebuild Indigenous structures that allow for the transformation of settler-colonial relations" (154). That being said, understanding what it means to actively support rather than supplant Indigenous efforts—particularly after decades of ignoring or dictating for them—can be a

difficult endeavor. Christie Schultz outlines how settler allies can begin to think through this relationship:

> The addition of the term "ally" to "settler" introduces the idea of a (new kind of) relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people…First, use of the word "ally" helps to answer the question, "How can I make a positive difference in the lives of marginalized people if I cannot claim identification with the group?" Second, allyship can say, "I stand with you and walk beside you" while leaving room for groups' self-determination. (Schultz 268-9)

Clearly, becoming a settler ally is an approach and attitude that requires humility and respect, attitudes that are difficult—if not impossible—to achieve for settlers actively assuming moves to innocence. I argue that YALO texts can be an engaging vehicle for helping settler youth to work through the process of negotiating their responsibilities to land and Indigenous peoples in order to become settler allies.

Representations of adolescence and adolescents in Oceania play a powerful role in shaping the material conditions within which Pasifika youth find themselves. The existence of positive representations of Pasifika adolescents is important in building self-esteem but also as a vehicle for encouraging settler youth to become allies. While these representations can and should be disseminated through multiple vehicles, YALO is uniquely suited to challenge negative stereotypes about Pasifika youth while simultaneously portraying them in a positive light.

Representations of Adolescence and Adolescents in Literature

So how, then, do YALO texts contribute to positive outcomes for Pasifika youth and the development of settler allies in Oceania? The answer to this question lies in the power of

literature, and particularly the activism of YALO authors imagining collaborative, decolonial futures for their youth readers. Reynolds explains that "contemporary YA fiction is participating in shaping thinking about what adolescents are and do and the roles that are being constructed for them in society" (69). Likewise, Antero Garcia articulates what is at stake for adolescent readers when adult writers shape their subjectivity, arguing that "youth culture is in part constructed through the ways society reads, interprets and reflects the books of young adult literature…YA books are directed toward building culture for the readers that encounter them" (5-6). With an expanded YAL audience that includes a large number of adults ("New Study"), this means that representations of youth culture extend beyond their targeted teen audience to include parents, teachers, coaches, and other adult figures.

As a result, it is useful to think about adolescence in literature as symbolic. As future adults, youth, the "rising generation," often represent hope and promise for the entire society (or on the other hand, "young people nowadays" might also take the blame for growing societal ills). Mapping the relationship in YAL novels between "the individual's need to grow and the society's need to improve itself" is a rich avenue for analysis that is often overlooked (Trites, qtd. in Hilton and Nikolajeva 1). Millard claims that "adolescents…have the potential to reconfigure the existing social structures and institutions to which they find themselves heir, and thereby in some senses change society" (2). Such radical potential is supported by scholarship considering Hawai'i-based YALO, which asserts that Local texts "offer glimpses of the multiple ways in which Hawai'i youth contradict older stereotypical notions of the adolescent" (Bean 34). McDougall asserts that Kaopio's depiction of a homeless Kanaka Maoli teen "represents an important counter-hegemonic effort to overturn [the] damaging negation of Hawaiian-ness, by privileging distinctly Hawaiian ways of knowing and doing, thereby resisting colonial ideology

seeking to discount Hawaiian epistemology" ("From Uē to Kūʻē" 57). That these decolonial outcomes are achieved in literature that centers adolescents and their experiences of adolescence thus functions as a powerful ideological construct with power to reconceptualize society.

Critics working in the field have for the most part failed to acknowledge this core focus on adolescence in YAL until very recently. Petrone et al. observe that "in a field intent on dispelling stereotypes tied to a range of social constructs, very little scholarship explores how YAL represents adolescence specifically as a denaturalized social category" (507). In other words, most scholarship on YAL productively attends to constructs like race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability, but largely ignores representations of the culturally constructed condition of adolescence. This lack of critical attention to representations of adolescence is all the more troubling when we consider that "ideas of adolescence and representations of youth come to shape [students'] lives, including how they view themselves" (Sarigianides et al. 16). In order to start the important work of understanding the role of youth and youth culture in shaping society, critics have begun to theorize ways to interrogate representations of adolescence/ts in YAL. Millard argues that one way to analyze coming of age narratives is to look closely at the ways adult writers have "appropriated, imagined, and deployed" the innocence of their young characters in order to "express social anxieties about their own social position, their perceptions of a dynamic and mutable society, and the predicament of young individuals who are in the process of being socialised by its challenges" (12-13). This approach functions to contextualize a novel's greater themes and message by honing in on the adult imaginary that is always at play in YAL works. Petrone et al. suggest deploying what they call a "Youth Lens" when reading YAL, which asks two central questions in order to uncover the ways a text works in relation to the larger ideological discourse surrounding adolescence: "How does the text represent

adolescence/ts?" and "What role does the text play in reinforcing and/or subverting dominant ideas about adolescence?" (511). In asking these critical questions of a text, we can then ask follow up questions about how these representations might affect teen readers' perceptions of themselves and others, particularly when representations intersect with Indigeneity and race, class, gender, and/or sexuality. Finally, we can ask how adults (as authors) participate in subverting negative stereotypes about Pasifika youth and reimagine relationships between settler and Pasifika adolescents. In the section that follows, I examine YALO novels by Kaopio, L. Young, Rangi Moleni, and Tim Tipene through an 'afakasi youth lens that asks how the texts portray Oceanic adolescence, paying special attention to how representations of adolescent 'afakasi-ness reflect the adult authors' decolonial agendas.

Representations of Adolescence and Adolescents in YALO

'Afakasi Racial and Cultural Identity

Negotiating visible markers of 'afakasi identity is perhaps one of the most challenging for Pasifika youth, since physical appearance and performed culture mediates the perceptions and actions of others in addition to affecting personal identity conflicts. As such, physical manifestations of race and culture can affect the degree to which 'afakasi youth are granted acceptance and/or access into their communities. In order to uncover how YALO authors address issues of mixed race and culture for Pasifika youth, I examine Kaopio's novellas *Written in the Sky* and *Up Among the Stars* alongside Wendt Young's novel *Telesa: The Covenant Keeper*. The character development in these novels suggests that a new 'afakasi conception of self refuses to see contradiction in embracing all aspects of racial and cultural identity, and in doing so, 'afakasi youth can successfully build community and solve problems effectively.

In 2005, Kanaka Maoli artist and writer Kaopio quietly published his first novel as an outgrowth of his creative MA project in Pacific Island Studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. *Written in the Sky* begins the story of ‘Īkauikalani, a houseless[28] Kanaka Maoli teen living at Ala Moana Beach Park in Honolulu after his grandmother’s death. His reliance on Kānaka Maoli epistemologies helps him to recover his genealogy and root his identity in Hawaiian cultural knowledge and practices. In 2011, Kaopio published a sequel, *Up Among the Stars*, which continues ‘Īkau’s journey to create a thriving space for himself and the community that he has built through embodying Hawaiian cultural values and practices. Kaopio’s work is particularly interesting in this regard, as it provides a counternarrative to Western depictions of Hawai‘i and the stereotypes of Indigenous youth discussed previously. Kaopio’s portrayal of ‘Īkau constructs an alternative youth culture that centers the Indigenous and brackets settler colonial agendas and expectations for adolescents in Hawai‘i. Within the texts, Kaopio’s teen characters present several competing models for adolescence, suggesting through the final outcomes for each character that ‘Īkau’s subjectivity is the most desirable.

The primary interpersonal conflict in *Written in the Sky* takes place between ‘Īkau and an unnamed “gang leader.” Kaopio characterizes the gang members using stereotypical images of Pacific Islander delinquents in public spaces:

> Six young men were laughing loudly under a tree, pushing each other roughly and slapping each others’ heads. They wore tank tops that exposed their muscular, heavily tattooed arms and swore profusely, spitting out the f-word without shame. The one who seemed to be the leader casually smoked a cigarette…[He] looked Hawaiian, or Samoan maybe, and had wide nostrils and dark, full lips surrounded by a scraggly goatee. (*Written* 15-6)

This passage presents clear markers of teen rebellion and misbehavior such as violence, swearing, and substance use in addition to racializing descriptors of tattoo sleeves and goatees common to Pacific Island men. The clear identification of the leader's wide nose and dark features as being "Hawaiian, or Samoan maybe" reflects a stereotypical image of delinquency in Hawai'i that is disproportionately young, male, and Pacific Islander. The gang leader repeatedly calls 'Īkau a "faggot," and later forces 'Īkau's friend, Hawaiian, to rub his face against the leader's genitals before beating him to death (*Written* 32). The image of the hypermasculine, violent Polynesian man pervades much of American popular discourse (Henderson 270-1), and Kaopio's reification of it here allows him to undermine it in juxtaposition with 'Īkau's positive representation of Hawaiian youth.

Another construction of Kānaka Maoli adolescence comes in the character of Maui, a Kamehameha Schools Kapālama boarding student caught between competing models of Hawaiian and American subjectivities. Named after one of Oceania's most beloved and mischievous ancient heroes, Maui represents the mixed cultural identity of a large population of Kānaka Maoli youth navigating identity conflicts between their Indigenous cultural heritage and expectations for behavior and success in a heavily Americanized settler state. Kaopio builds this conflict into each of Maui's encounters with 'Īkau, presenting him as both a "typical" American teen and a Hawaiian learning about his culture and heritage. At their initial meeting at the Bishop Museum planetarium for a free astronomy presentation, Maui's relationship with his sister reflects an antagonistic animosity stereotypical of modern American teen siblings in stark contrast with Kānaka Maoli kinship and relationship patterns, which are built and maintained through affection, love, and forgiveness (Handy and Pukui 168-9). During the presentation, however, he expresses a deep level of engagement with learning Hawaiian constellations. He

explicitly makes a connection between himself and the legendary hero when the presenter points out the constellation Manaiakalani, or Māui's Fishhook:[29] "That's my fishhook, cuz, that's me—Maui!" (*Up Among* 81). The tension between Maui's Hawaiian culture and American mindset reemerges when he meets ʻĪkau the next day at Ala Moana Beach Park. Needing one more paddler to man their canoe, Maui puts ʻĪkau on the spot, expecting him to lie to the coach about his paddling ability.. After ʻĪkau chooses to tell the truth, he expresses anger that Maui would try to manipulate him. Maui's apology reflects an inner conflict between a desire for friendship and personal success: "Don't be mad, please. I just want to try out for steersman this summer…Besides, you remember what we saw yesterday about Pacific navigation, right? It's our culture!" (*Up Among* 103). While Maui is clearly an active and knowledgeable participant in cultural practices like canoe paddling, his motivations are primarily self-serving, reflecting a Western orientation to individual success over Indigenous concepts of community and relationship-building. His position as a Hawaiian student attending the Hawaiian educational flagship Kamehameha Schools further underscores that conflicts between Indigenous and Western identities are a common and ongoing occurrence, even for young Hawaiians with a firm knowledge of their cultural heritage. For Maui, the tension between his Hawaiian and American identities are often in conflict, a result of his attempts to draw on them separately depending on the context.

Then there is ʻĪkau himself, a model of Indigenous adolescence that Kaopio juxtaposes with the portrayals of Maui and the gang leader to construct a radically new way to be for Kānaka Maoli youth. Kaopio contrasts ʻĪkau's actions with those of Maui and the gang leader as a counterexample to standard narratives of youth in Hawaiʻi. Over the course of the narrative, ʻĪkau embraces his Kanaka Maoli identity by practicing cultural values of reciprocity, humility,

and respect regardless of the context. In his first meeting with the gang leader, ʻĪkau is compared to "a baby deer encountering a pack of wild dogs" (*Written* 15). In this instance as well as during their second encounter, ʻĪkau flees from the danger and violence of the gang. However, in his final encounter, armed with the maturity that he has gained through cultural practices of reciprocity and community building, he is able to lean on the solidarity of what Kelsey Amos terms a "multicultural lāhui" he has formed to stand his ground (Amos 5). His maturity is evident in the realization that "Normally, he'd have run away, but after everything he had been through, he decided he would not" (*Written* 138). While the gang members scatter at the first sign of trouble, ʻĪkau's lāhui, built on bonds of friendship rather than fear, "stand[s] firm" in response to ʻĪkau's directive not to be afraid because "he can't hurt us if we stick together" (*Written* 140). Likewise, comparing ʻĪkau's actions to Maui's reveals a mindful and unselfish version of adolescence. In attending the planetarium, ʻĪkau is fascinated by the presentation of Hawaiian constellations, and is able to answer all of the questions asked by Steve, the presenter. Unlike Maui, who draws loud attention to his personal connection to the legendary demigod, when ʻĪkau is asked how he knows so much about the heavens, he shrugs humbly and says, "I don't know. I always liked science class" (*Up Among* 85). During paddling practice, ʻĪkau is also invested in teamwork rather than seeking the prestigious steersman position like Maui: "'ʻĪkau learned early on not to fall out of sync with the others, noticing how the boat slowed down when they were not working together" (*Up Among* 135). These examples illustrate an Indigenous way of being that decenters the individual in favor of the community.

A final facet in analyzing how Kaopio disrupts stereotypes of adolescence is through the interactions that ʻĪkau has with adults, which are defined by his exercise of respect and reciprocity. Mapping these relationships reveals that in this sense, too, Kaopio resists

conventional portrayals of youth needing adult intervention to survive. His first meaningful encounter with an adult comes in the form of an older houseless man named Hawaiian, who invites ʻĪkau to share a meal with him. While he initially threatens to turn ʻĪkau in to social services, he respects ʻĪkau's decision to stay out of the foster system and provides him with friendship, protection from the gang, and resources for surviving in the form of a well-used, dog-eared journal. The other major adult in ʻĪkau's life is widowed retiree Gladys Lu, whom he refers to as Gladness. While she knows that ʻĪkau lives at Ala Moana Beach Park, she invites him into her home, feeds him regularly, and even offers to have him live with her as a result of his weekly commitment to clean and maintain her yard. Her friendship is crucial to his development because "she showed genuine interest in what he had to say. It gave him a feeling of importance to be respected, rather than being treated like a dumb kid" (*Up Among* 49). While adults often provide him with information or resources that prove invaluable to his growth, they treat him with respect and dignity, recognizing his maturity and trusting his judgement: ʻĪkau is firmly in charge of his own agency throughout the story. That these adults know ʻĪkau's circumstances and forbear from intervening in favor of his agency provides a radically new model of adolescent-adult interaction rooted in reciprocity and mutual respect rather than authority and subordination.

In comparison to ʻĪkau, the representations of adolescence symbolized by Maui and the gang leader fall short of positive. While Maui pays lip service to his culture, his focus on individual success promises only to maintain cycles of dispossession and cultural loss that have been present in Hawaiʻi for decades; similarly, the gang leader's ultimate capture and imprisonment echoes all-too-familiar narratives of incarcerated Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, another tragic cycle linked to poverty, dispossession, and the ongoing effects of

colonization. Of the three, only ʻĪkau is able to thrive, despite initially being the most disadvantaged both economically and relationally. Kaopio's construction of ʻĪkau's adolescence in comparison to the other two teens clearly maps a resurgent course of existence based in recovering cultural knowledge and practices. *Written in the Sky* and *Up Among the Stars* provide a model for Indigenous living that is achievable in the urban and rural spaces of contemporary Hawaiʻi. By re-constructing what it means to be an adolescent in Hawaiʻi, the texts function as both windows of compassion into the lives of houseless Kānaka Maoli youth and mirrors of empowerment for those who are currently living ʻĪkau's reality; for all adolescents, they constitute a call to Indigenize the everyday to enact long-term social and political change.

Like Kaopio's work, Wendt Young's self-described "YA paranormal romance set in Samoa" exemplifies the ʻafakasi nature of YALO texts. The self-published series went viral with the publication of *Telesā: The Covenant Keeper* in 2012, inspiring an entire subgenre of self-published YALO novels. The series centers around the experiences of Leila Folger, an ʻafakasi Samoan teen raised in the U.S. by her white father. When he dies unexpectedly, she moves to Samoa to learn her dead mother's heritage. To her surprise, she arrives to find that her mother is very much alive, and also happens to be a supernatural being called a telesā, a spirit woman capable of controlling the elements. As her daughter, Leila is naturally also telesā, and must learn to control her new power. Of course, there is also a romance, which challenges Leila (and readers) to rethink her assumptions about race, relationships, and belonging. Generically, the novel is clearly drawing on conventions of YA literature, particularly the category of paranormal romance. However, it is still very much a Pacific text, and Young's portrayal of adolescence throughout grapples with many of the issues of identity, culture, and politics that are fundamental aspects of Oceanic literature.

Early on in the novel, Leila's inner dialogue reveals a deep-seated discomfort with her racial makeup. She describes herself as

> a ramshackle collection of 'toos'. Too tall. Too broad. Untamable dirt brown hair that was too bushy, and only redeemed itself slightly by having gold highlights in the sun….Dark eyes set too deep into a forehead too wide. Lips too thick….Too brown to be white but too white to be brown. (12)

She later describes herself as a "half-caste disappointment" and says to herself, "Face it Leila, you're an in-between nothing and nobody wants you around" (72). These descriptors reflect the deficit-mindset often associated with 'afakasi as lacking, a colonial attitude she brings with her from the States. As a result, Leila is defensive, easily offended, and prideful during many of her initial interactions with the other Samoan teens.

Leila's racial anxieties are exacerbated on the second day of school, when the students participate in a class debate about the place of 'afakasi in Samoan society. Leila is upset when Daniel, one of the school prefects, takes the position that intermarriage and mixed-race children damage the purity of Samoan culture. After lashing out and angrily walking away amid laugher from the class, she learns that Daniel is also 'afakasi, and his arguments were very much tongue-in-cheek. Leila is informed by another classmate, Simone, that "[Daniel] is mixed like you. Like a lot of us. We make fun of ourselves all the time….Maybe it's different back where you come from, but here we're all afakasi, mixed, and it's no big deal. Today, back there, he was talking about himself, which is why everyone was laughing" (45). The notion that being 'afakasi is both acceptable and common leads to a transformation in Leila's attitude about race and the other students. She shifts from being defensive about her racial makeup to "exulting in this new sensation. Is this what belonging felt like? Is this how it felt to fit in somewhere? I had spent so

many years looking at life from outside the window that it felt strange to actually be in the room with everyone else" (49). Leila's new understanding transforms her reality, allowing her to become part of the community rather than self-segregated. Her shift in thinking about race is the beginning of a decolonizing journey that changes her Western assumptions in favor of a new ʻafakasi consciousness.

In addition to challenging colonial attitudes that venerate racial purity, Young asks readers to question similar notions about cultural purity and tradition. In the novel, Daniel has a contemporary tattoo sleeve, telling Leila that "I designed the pattern myself. See? It incorporates symbols from all of my cultures and it's got a lot about the people in my life who mean something to me" (189). Daniel's sleeve is highly personal and expresses the aspects of his life—culture and relationships—that are important to him as an individual. However, he also expresses a desire to undergo the intense process of acquiring a Samoan tatau, or full-body tattoo, which in women occupy the entirety of the thighs; and in men cover the hips, thighs, and lower back down to the knees. As Daniel explains, "Traditionally, a sogaimiti marked the passage of a boy to manhood, and it was the mark of a warrior, one who was brave enough to defend the village, his family. My grandfather had one, and I would like to honor him and my culture by having one done as well" (190). Daniel's description of the peʻa (male tatau) is clearly focused on familial and communal responsibilities rather than on individual expression, representing fundamental Samoan cultural values. Daniel's insistence on simultaneously inscribing both the individualistic tattoo sleeve and the communal tatau onto his body echoes an image in Albert Wendt's well-known essay, "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," in which Wendt describes seeing a Samoan man in Aotearoa New Zealand "striding up the street in blue sports shorts, blue t-shirt, short, cropped hair, Reeboks, eating a hamburger, and parading his tatau" (411). One of the primary

cultural struggles for Pasifika youth is the conflict between Indigenous communal culture and Western individuality, and Wendt's image, like Daniel's tatau, is symbolic of how individualistic and communal values can be inscribed onto a single body without contradiction. Daniel's body thus becomes an embodied manifestation of the new 'afakasi, allowing both cultural values to exist simultaneously rather than asking individuals to choose one or the other.

Importantly, the novel also challenges binary thinking about gender. One of the most popular characters in the series is Simone, a representation of fa'afafine, Samoa's third gender.[30] Literally translated as "in the way of a woman," fa'afafine is a fluid, culturally-inscribed gender that Leila learns about during a shopping trip soon after her arrival to Samoa. She is surprised to notice that "the cashier had been a man in a tight red tank top and floral mini skirt. Pink fingernails and expertly applied makeup had completed the ensemble. I guess I hadn't expected a full drag queen attire in a Samoan dairy on a Saturday morning" (29). Her reaction earns a scolding from Uncle Tuala, a conservative Christian, who tells her, "Leila, in Samoa we have three different genders…men and women and fa'afafine. It's tradition. Don't stare. Don't be rude. They don't like it" (29). As an outsider used to seeing non-binary gender representations relegated to the margins of society, Leila is initially unsure how to behave when she comes face-to-face with a fa'afafine in the mundane, central space of a community store. However, Tuala's reassurance that fa'afafine are a normal and accepted part of Samoan culture helps her to befriend Simone (also known as Simon and assigned male pronouns by Young), who soon becomes one of her best friends at school. As an 'afakasi gender, fa'afafine are simultaneously men and women, and at the same time also something more. Able to transcend the otherwise strict gender confines of Samoan society, as a fa'afafine Simone is able to freely socialize with any group at school, arguably giving him some of the highest social capital of any character in

the novel. Simone's character is an important new 'afakasi representation because Young is careful to avoid sensationalizing or marginalizing him; he is simply another interesting character in the novel, accepted without question by the rest of the students and teachers, and by extension, the reader.

While there are many other 'afakasi elements at work throughout the novel, Young's primary focus on 'afakasi adolescents portrays difference as a strength rather than a liability. Normalizing the mixed racial, cultural, and gender identities of Leila, Daniel, and Simone in the novel allows Young to reconceive reality for adolescent readers, creating a new 'afakasi consciousness that is inclusive rather than exclusive.

Negotiating Diaspora: Place and Family

In this section, I look at representations of Pasifika youth negotiating Western and Indigenous family structures in the diaspora and on ancestral lands. *Terewai Island Dreamer* is the first novel in a planned trilogy called The Children of Māui Series, and is notable for a variety of reasons, including portrayal of the cultural tensions in families with mixed Pasifika heritage (in this case, Māori and Tongan). While the novel also remythologizes elements of Māori story, for the purposes of this analysis I will focus on how the protagonist's experiences with her nuclear and extended Tongan family articulate the importance of relationships and place in maintaining healthy families and identities for Pasifika youth.

The story is set initially in Utah and Arizona, where 15 year-old Malia Terewai's parents struggle to make enough money to support their five children and also contribute financially at frequent Tongan events. Her Tongan father, Semisi, is portrayed as stern and distant: "His approval meant a lot to me and my siblings, and we worked hard at everything to earn it, but with Dad you could never tell. To him, depending on his mood or his schedule, we were

detachable, like a Velcro fastener" (ch.1). Minor tension becomes major drama, however, when Malia watches Semisi spend all of the family's rent money during a cousin's wedding reception, expecting afterwards to go out drinking kava[31] for the next few days with some of the other men.

When Malia's Māori mother Lee-Mari confronts Semisi in the parking lot outside the reception, she says, "This is not about the kava. I respect the Tongan traditions, you know that. This is about your misuse of an ancient custom…this is not good for our family. You miss work. Between us, we barely earn enough to support ourselves, let alone to throw away at weddings" (ch. 2). Lee-Mari's critique echoes that of many women's organizations and churches in Pasifika communities that discourage kava use because of the social and economic strain that it places on Pacific Islander families: "faikava [kava parties] is destroying families . . . All too often, I see fathers leaving their wives and children at home while he sits beside the tou'a (a woman who mixes kava) . . . (Agence France Press, qtd. in McDonald and Jowett 220). The issue is severe enough that it can cause frequent drinkers to become apathetic, and "in some cases, kava drinkers begin imbibing in the early evening and continue until dawn. On weekends, some drink kava continuously for 48 hours. Kava is becoming an excuse . . . for some men to avoid family responsibilities" (PACNEWS, qtd in McDonald and Jowett 220). Unfortunately, Semisi's bad behavior continues, and in response to Lee-Mari's criticism he violently knocks her to the ground in front of Malia and her older brother Will before leaving to the kava party. Moleni's frank portrayal of the realities of kava abuse and its effects on Pasifika families is an important one, especially since its negative effects—which include physical, emotional, and financial abuse—are frequently swept under the rug within Pasifika communities and all but invisible outside of them.

It's also important to note here that Moleni uses the character of Lee-Mari to model an appropriate response to domestic violence, which is to file for a restraining order, pack up the kids, and move out. The family immediately leaves Utah to live with their Aunt in Arizona, where they get counseling and attempt to move on with their lives. However, one year later an ostensibly rehabilitated Semisi reestablishes contact, hoping to spend time with his children. Will and Malia are initially skeptical, understandably afraid that he might relapse, and also not yet ready to forgive him. After a few months of safe, supervised visits, Semisi invites the entire family on a two-month family vacation to Tonga, where his parents will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. While Will and Malia are still not entirely sure that they are ready to trust Semisi, the offer is an enticing one, especially for diasporic Pasifika youth who have never been to their ancestral homelands, learned their native language, or met their extended families.

The shift in setting from Arizona to Tonga marks an immediate change in the entire tone of the novel, and as a result any analysis of family dynamic necessarily also requires an acknowledgement of place. The first people that Malia meets upon arrival at Fua'amotu airport are her grandparents, whom she has never met. They immediately approach, and "Together they wrapped their arms around me and each pressed a tender kiss into my face. An overwhelming sense of belonging poured into me. My eyes brimmed with tears. *They love me*" (ch. 4). Malia's experience with her grandparents stands in stark contrast to the treatment of Semisi back in the States. In fact, all of the children begin to thrive immediately in Tonga.

Moleni provides plenty of examples of extended family communal living throughout the remainder of the novel, honoring the beauty of Tongan conceptions of family and love. For example, when the umu (underground oven) was ready, "As if on cue, everyone helped to dig out or load up all the prepared food into trucks, vans, and onto horse-drawn saliote carts" (ch. 7).

On another occasion, a storm "reduced the plantation to less than half of what it had been, and yet, here was my family, cheerfully content to work through it together" (ch. 14). For Malia, it's an eye-opening experience that helps her to mend an ongoing antagonistic relationships with her own sister. It also helps her to understand Semsisi better, realizing that "Had we never come, we wouldn't have realized where [Semisi] came from. We wouldn't have known the depth of his connection to his parents, his peoples, and to this beautiful land—connections we all shared" (ch. 9). Malia's newfound understanding of the importance of place and relationships in Tongan culture helps her to understand and begin to forgive Semisi for the pain he caused their family.

Tonga thus represents a safe place where Malia's nuclear family is able to start the process of healing through the support of loving extended family. Within this space, Semisi is also able to articulate his own negative behavior as a consequence of disconnection from Tonga, where humility and cooperation are integral qualities of family life. He admits that "I didn't care about anyone but myself. I was all into what my friends and cousins back in Utah were doing and how I could impress them…I kept most of the money I earned for myself, to give away in kava circles or at celebrations, always trying to be a big shot" (ch. 5). We find out later that his individualistic mindset was also a side effect of a willful disconnection from family relationships. An uncle explains to Malia that

> When [Semisi] lived in Tonga, everyone in our family contributed, whatever we could, to send him to America. He was supposed to go to school, work hard, earn money, and then send for the rest of us. Instead, he met your mother…and we never heard from him again until last year. (ch. 8)

While she does not excuse Semisi's negative behavior, Moleni suggests through Semisi's story that healthy connections to family and place can function as an anchor for Pasifika identity in

diasporic spaces, and that disconnection from place and relationships results in broken families. Likewise, Malia notes at the end of the novel that "each one of us had become a better person because of our time together in Tonga" (ch. 19), underscoring how functioning extended family units and connection to place can strengthen the cultural identities and emotional health of Pasifika youth.

Settler Youth as 'Afakasi

Most YALO novels focus solely on the experiences of Pasifika youth, which is of critical importance, given the stakes. However, considering the demographics of most Oceanic nations, Pasifika youth rarely go through life without significant interactions with settler youth. As a result, Tim Tipene's *Patu: A Novel* is noteworthy for its careful representation of Māori adolescents, but also of pākehā youth and the tensions and barriers inherent in their interactions. The novel initially focuses on Jahnine, a pākehā teenager who is attempting to return a Māori patu (war club) stolen by her great-great grandfather in order to lift the resulting spiritual curse from her family. She is helped on her way by a group of urban Māori teens and young adults with varying degrees of cultural and linguistic dispossession and placelessness. While the plot is largely driven by Jahnine's quest, *Patu* is primarily a character-driven novel that is equally invested in how the journey helps each character begin the process of healing from the effects of settler colonialism.

While engaging with Jahnine's settler perspective is a critical aspect of the novel, Tipene is careful to decenter her as the primary character as the novel progresses. He accomplishes this primarily through the use of a frequently shifting point of view, which allows readers to spend parts of each chapter experiencing the journey through different characters' perspectives. Since Jahnine is only one of five travelling companions, this means that we spend much more time

with the thoughts of the Māori youth. The result is that the quest to return the patu becomes a collective journey of reparation and recovery. Starting with Jahnine's point of view is also symbolic of the larger journey; because the issues surrounding the stolen patu are the result of her ancestor's irresponsible judgement, Jahnine feels compelled to make amends. By situating her this way, Tipene is suggesting that because settler ancestors are responsible for much of the dispossession faced by Māori today, it is their descendants' responsibility to participate in decolonizing efforts. His portrayal of Jahnine clearly models one path that settler youth can take to becoming settler allies in this process.

Initially, Jahnine reflects common settler attitudes towards Indigenous peoples and colonial history. Prior to a meeting with Māori tribal leaders in Auckland to ask for help with returning the patu, she worries that they will be "upset Maori chasing her down the street, Maori radicals like the ones on television during Waitangi Day, their faces covered in tattoos" (38). Jahnine's fear is a reflection of settler anxiety reinforced by colonial media that stereotypes Indigenous activists as crazed, aggressive, and unreasonable by depicting them as Other via cultural markers such as tā moko (facial or body tattoos). During the meeting, in which she is treated respectfully by the Māori council, she regrets not paying attention in Te Reo Māori class, because she cannot understand any of the protocols. She admits that she failed to learn Te Reo because she felt it "had little relevance to her and something she figured she's never have to use" (51), and moments later thinks that "it was rude when people spoke a language other than English around her" (52). Later that day, she refers to her experience in a Māori home as bring "in a foreign bathroom in a foreign house" (99). These examples underscore the totality of settler colonial structures within the urban space of Auckland; Jahnine, as pākehā, has never needed to

interact with Māori, and ironically considers Māori language and spaces "foreign" despite having been born and raised on Māori land.

The first Māori youth that Jahnine meets exemplifies the effects of genealogical and land dispossession, existing as a marginalized statistic of the settler state. Andy is 'afakasi racially and culturally, with an absent pākehā father and a complete lack of knowledge of his Māori heritage. His mother, Patricia, was adopted by a pākehā couple at birth, and was denied any knowledge of her birth family, tribe, land, or language.

> Andy had always been at a loss when it came to claiming his cultural heritage. When it came to Maoridom, he had no knowledge of any tribe, marae, mountain or river…He was always ticked as Maori in the ethnicity boxes when it came to anything official…by labelling him as Maori those involved were able to access greater funding and could add another number to their statistics. (88)

Able to hear voices and see visions from a young age, Andy is also overmedicated and institutionalized: "The doctors had encouraged Andy to believe that the voices and the occasional visions were purely the fantasy of an overworked imagination brought on from being in a broken home and dysfunctional family" (170). However, he is able to leave the hospital with Jahnine by posing as hospital staff rather than as a patient while she is visiting her mother. She quickly learns that he is not "normal" by Western standards, but his promises to help her return the patu lead them to the rest of the group, led by Andy's brother, Jimmy.

The remaining three members of the party include Jimmy, his girlfriend, Piki, and their close friend Sid. All three are slightly older than Jahnine and Andy, most likely in their early 20s. Like Andy, all three are Māori and exhibit varying levels of dispossession. Jimmy, as Andy's brother, has no knowledge of his genealogy and tribe. He is first portrayed through Jahnine's

point of view; she describes him as “God-like. Tall and strong with long naturally wavy black hair. Dark brown and handsome, with koru tattoos wrapped around his arms” (97). However, after a night drinking at a pub followed by a violent episode in which he destroys their broken-down car in a rage, she notes that “He wasn’t looking so tall, strong and god-like now. Instead he looked broken and weak” (137). Jimmy’s anger and insecurity is related to his inability to please his girlfriend, Piki, because of his lifestyle choices. His thoughts reveal that he “was the hero when he played the bad boy….It was the only thing he believed he was good at” (139). Unlike Jimmy and Andy, Piki has knowledge of her family and tribe, and has been taught Māori language and cultural protocols. However, she remains culturally ‘afakasi, choosing to live away from her family out of guilt for becoming a teen mother and the lifestyle that she shares with Jimmy. While motherhood has sparked in her a desire to change, she acknowledges that “reclaiming one’s birthright is a long and arduous path littered with compromise and sacrifice” (167). Finally, Jimmy’s best friend Sid comes from a single-parent home in which he regularly watched men rape and beat his mother. He copes by being perpetually drunk and/or high, stating that “Real men, hard men, drank beer in pubs, listened to rock and reggae and drive V8s…They didn’t sit around blubbering about their feelings. Even though Sid often felt inadequate, he strived to be a real man, just like the ones his mother used to entertain” (163). As these examples demonstrate, all four Māori youth are depicted as broken and dysfunctional within the colonial confines of urban Auckland. Jahnine’s quest to return the patu precipitates the group’s departure from the city, a shift in setting which Tipene uses to suggest a path toward healing.

Jimmy’s destruction of the car provides a catalyst for the group to leave man-made environments and reconnect with the land. During a two-day hike through native forest, the group must learn to effectively communicate in order to navigate, share resources, and develop

relationships of trust. Taking turns carrying the patu, they soon realize that "The patu was a bridge between the physical and spiritual," which discomforts everyone except for Andy because they have been disconnected from any spirituality for so long (205). For Andy—who begins to use his Māori name, Anaru—it is invigorating because it restores his true nature and identity. Reconnected with the land and away from his medications, "Andy, who had been lost for so long, was now being found, being touched, being known and held. For once he belonged. He was not questioned in this place, nor discarded, but welcomed…He was of the land, a child of the earth, and everything around him, the rocks, the trees, the birds and the insects, were his family" (166). Anaru's transformation is complete when the group finally arrives at a rural marae, and he is able to complete the cultural protocols and successfully return the patu. He observes that "like the patu, he had been returned, too. He was Maori and proud" (234). At the marae, the travelers also notice a highly respected woman, who is recognized by the tribe as a seer for her ability to hear voices and see visions, much like Anaru. Tipene juxtaposes the woman with Anaru in order to emphasize the differences between Māori with a knowledge of their whakapapa, or genealogy, and those who have been displaced from it. Without family members to recognize and value his gift, Anaru's abilities are repressed by a settler culture that does not understand or value them.

For Johnny, Piki, and Sid, the forest trek is likewise healing, though perhaps not as dramatically. Johnny recognizes that his urban lifestyle is contributing to his inability to succeed in life, noting that

> The busyness and frantic rush and pressure of the city was the debilitating booze that got so many off their faces. Like any drunk they couldn't see it, they just kept drinking the lies of a fabricated existence in their pursuit of industrialized and mass-produced dreams. Jimmy wanted out. He wanted to be sober. He wanted to be real. (208)

For Piki, Jimmy's revelation is "the push that he needed" to finally "stand up and be a man" (214). As the group member with the most cultural knowledge, she aids Jahnine and the others in navigating the protocols of entering the marae. The effect of the journey on Sid is more ambiguous: "He hadn't gone this long without some sort of mind-bending substance for years. He wasn't used to sobriety. Nor was he used to clean, fresh air. He reckoned it was killing him. For him, nature was unnatural, cold and dirty. It made him feel uncomfortable. He felt as if he had to change to fit in with it" (206). While he smiles more at the marae than in the rest of the novel, he is also keen to visit the local pub later, so we are only left to hope that he will choose to change as a result of the experience.

For Jahnine, the journey is no less transformative, even though she plays a very small role in moving the plot along once the quest is underway. Most of her transformation comes from observation and following the lead of her companions throughout the journey, which Tipene portrays as a model for how settlers can function as allies. She and Piki learn the importance of communication, which helps to alleviate Piki's initial distrust and jealousy; it likewise allows Jahnine to express her own settler anxiety about her responsibility as a pākehā on Māori lands. She asks Piki, "What about my generation? We had nothing to do with the past…it's not our fault that we were born here. What are we supposed to do, go back to where our ancestors came from? But this is our home. We're New Zealanders" (173). Her actions, however, symbolically answer the question. Jahnine's choice to return the patu on behalf of a great-great grandfather that she never met suggests that contemporary settlers are responsible to make restitution for the actions of their ancestors. The physical return of the patu also suggests that the reparations be tangible rather than intangible apologies or money; as Tuck and Yang emphasize, "decolonization is not a metaphor," and any efforts toward decolonization must

necessarily involve discussions of land recovery and restoration (21). That Jahnine is the one to instigate the quest symbolizes the importance of settler allies desiring to decolonize, while her choice to follow the lead of her Māori companions provides a model for how they can do so.

Ultimately, her interactions with Anaru, Jimmy, Piki, and Sid teach Jahnine how to become a settler ally that "engages settler colonialism so that we never lose sight of those conditions or the privileges we derive from them even as we seek to rearticulate our positionalities, and in this way, 'settler ally' encompasses the imaginative possibilities for collaborative work with Indigenous peoples" (Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance*). In the end, Jahnine is named a "chiefly woman" by the elder at the marae (229) after having been gifted with a moko drawn by Anaru and Piki, who likewise adorn her with feathers from the native kereru and introduced pheasant as a representation of her 'afakasi heritage (202). Ultimately, it is Jahnine's settler journey to atone for the sins of the past that allows all of the youth to begin the difficult work of healing. While I am not proposing that Tipene believes that Māori can only recover from the scars of colonization with the help of settler allies, his representation of Jahnine and her role in the novel does suggest that settlers can and should contribute to decolonizing Oceania, and that healing will come more quickly and completely when the two groups engage in imaginative collaborative work.

Conclusion

As these examples demonstrate, representations of adolescence in YALO have the potential to transform both Pasifika and settler youth. By presenting 'afakasi subjectivities as normal and perhaps even desirable, these texts encourage a new 'afakasi consciousness that empowers Pasifika youth and encourages settler youth to become allies. As such, they exemplify Leanne Simpson's call for Indigenous peoples to "step out of the [cognitive box of imperialism],

remove our colonial blinders and at least see the potential for radically different ways of existence" (148). In doing so, however, YALO refuses to ignore current existences; instead, writers provide honest portrayals of the challenges Oceanic youth confront daily in order to provide models for new behavior and glimpses into decolonial futures.

CHAPTER THREE: ADAPTATION AND CULTURAL RESURGENCE

Perhaps the most famous ‘afakasi throughout Oceania are the trickster demigods, whose genealogical mixing of human and the divine allowed them to bridge the temporal and the spiritual in order to enact radical changes to society and the natural world. The ability of Māui, Olifat, Letao, and others to ingeniously make use of all their spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social resources transformed Oceania, and serves as an historical precedent for the potential of Oceanic youth to exercise the “polytricks of ‘afakasi” (Taylor 5-7). Karlo Mila theorizes this ability as “polycultural capital,” which is “an accumulation of distinctive cultural resources; intertextual skills (a sense of how these cultural texts relate to another), the power to negotiate between them and the ability to deploy these symbolic resources strategically in different contexts” (297).[32] She further describes ‘afakasi individuals[33] as having “multiple tongues,” “many eyes,” and the ability to negotiate compromises, all of which place them in a “position of power” (Mila 297). As I have shown, however, dominant narratives largely position ‘afakasi identities as deficient rather than powerful, and Native American writer Thomas King’s assertion that “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (2) is an important reminder of why Pasifika youth must be exposed to stories that position them as figures with polycultural capital as they negotiate their identities. This exposure to story necessarily includes representations in contemporary society, as chapter two addresses, but also stories and histories that convey Indigenous languages, cultures, and worldviews.

One of the most exciting aspects of YALO texts is that they creatively embody Hau‘ofa’s reconceptualization of Oceanic space and time as “vast” and “expanding” (39) in their storytelling. In this chapter, I examine how YALO writers incorporate Indigenous stories and storytelling in their writing as ways to “write back” against colonial representations and

ideologies, and in the process, help youth to reconceptualize their own purpose and place in the world. Through their imaginative resistance, these writers create glimpses into decolonial futures for nations and communities throughout Oceania that empower Pasifika youth, encourage settler allies, and build relationships of trust and respect between them. These adaptations are examples of new ‘afakasi forms of storytelling and stories that intermix Indigenous oral traditions with various contemporary written genres and storytelling techniques. It is important to point out here that while I focus primarily on adaptations of oral literatures to written forms in this chapter, Indigenous visual and material literatures are also important influences on YALO,[34] and should be addressed in future research.

Story Adaptation in Contemporary Pacific Literatures

The adaptation of Indigenous stories into written forms is an integral feature of Oceanic literatures. Folklorist Steven Winduo goes so far as to claim that “folktales occupy the central textual function in the contemporary literature of Oceania” (2). These adaptations are especially striking in YALO, where an ‘afakasi mixing of time and place makes them distinct from versions written for children or adult/general audiences. With few exceptions, adaptations of Oceanic folklore in children’s literature tend to focus on retelling stories within the same mythic setting as oral versions, while most adult/general audience novels make use of these same stories metaphorically within the realistic framework of contemporary settings. In contrast, YALO weaves living cultural heroes, gods, and their stories directly into the fabric of our contemporary world, an ‘afakasi mixing of place and time that renders Indigenous stories both relatable and relevant to present-day Oceania—and especially its youth. While this trend is consistent with many mainstream YA fantasy series such as Harry Potter or Rick Riordan’s series on Greek, Norse, and Egyptian mythologies, deploying this adaptation strategy in Oceania has distinct

consequences that go beyond entertaining or moralizing functions because they reinscribe living histories that have been overwritten or erased during the process of colonization.

A result of this practice is that by making these cultural stories relevant and immediate, they legitimize the experiences of Pasifika youth as well as introduce diasporic youth to the richness of their cultural heritage, including values, spirituality, cultural practices, genealogy, (some) language,[35] and history. I argue that bringing historical and mythical figures into the present allows adolescent protagonists to interact directly with their own histories in order to effect positive change in the present and future. These texts also powerfully demonstrate the importance of understanding how Indigenous and settler histories interact, modeling possibilities for Indigenous and settler teens to work together to confront the ways their shared colonial histories have affected their own positionalities and responsibilities in regard to land, culture, race, and privilege in Oceania.

Writers have creatively mixed oral literatures with Western forms throughout the history of Pacific literature. Keown argues that the practice of blending Pacific discourses and forms with Western ones is an important way to "[explore] the relevance of Pacific oral traditions to contemporary sociopolitical realities" (179); the purpose of these forms is "not simply to replicate past traditions, but to combine these traditions with contemporary motifs and energies in order to free ancestral spirits and invite them into the modern world" (175). Selina Tusitala Marsh calls this "remythologising," a practice in which

> writers draw upon the cultural weight embodied by a mythic figure and reimagine it within a contemporary environment; they both revitalize the myth and culturally invigorate it in the present day….Additionally, through reimagining, writers activate the space of cultural memory, creating contemporary parallels with archaic initiatory

> elements, demonstrating that culture is dynamic and open, rather than closed and static….When writers remythologise cultural figures they individually enact a collective remembering—and…remembering is key to identity. ("Nafanua" 263)

In most YALO texts, remythologizing occurs literally rather than metaphorically, placing the mythic figure within the mundane space of our contemporary world. In doing so, it re-stories and works to restore the spaces that teens inhabit with Indigenous histories erased by colonial agendas.

Despite the positive potential of YALO, the practice of adapting oral stories into writing for young people presents a number of issues, particularly when these adaptations function as stand-ins for cultural and linguistic transmission. In his essay, "In Search of a 'Written Fāgogo': Contemporary Pacific Literature for Children," Long highlights concern by some Pasifika writers that adaptations of cultural storytelling genres in contemporary writing "[bear] little to no resemblance to traditional forms" (Sefulu Ioane, qtd. in Long 242) and that attempting to capture these oral forms in writing "begins the process of reduction" and simplification (Pio Manoa, qtd. in Long 243). When it comes to children's and YA literature in contemporary Oceania, the stakes are high for adaptations that lose most of their traditional generic form because literature is a critical site for preserving and conveying culture.

Similar critiques have been made in terms of how traditional myths, legends, and histories have been loosely retold in contemporary works at the expense of the traditional story. For example, Lani Wendt Young expressed fears prior to the launch of her *Telesā* series that her creative license with the nature and sacredness of a type of Samoan aitu (spirit) called teine sā (literally "sacred girl," or female forest and water spirits/deities that protect and govern specific locations) would be met with "outrage, hissing, and spitting" for irresponsibly teaching Samoan

and non-Samoan youth incorrect cultural knowledge (Young "What Makes a Book"). In working through these complex issues about the nature and purpose of storytelling, however, it is important to recognize that the translation from orality to text is loaded with an incredibly complex set of difficulties, even without the added complexities of translation across languages and cultures. No matter how faithfully a translator/adapter attempts to preserve a given story or form, a written copy will always be not only a reduction of the oral version, but at risk of being mistaken for the "only" or "definitive" version of that story (Long 243).

Long proposes, however, that children's literature can be a site of potential for these adapted stories and storytelling forms rather than one of reduction and restriction. He suggests that "for children's writing the search for a written fāgogo[36] can be a thawing moment, a moment for expansion. Written stories can grow out of traditional oral forms" (243). Embracing the imaginative and flexible experimentation of form and storytelling afforded by YALO admittedly carries with it the danger of misrepresentation and appropriation—a frequent and common occurrence in literature about Oceania. However, it also has incredible potential for creating new representations of contemporary realities as well as potential realities based in cultural values and knowledge. One way that YALO is able to capitalize on this potential is that the texts do not claim to be faithful adaptations of traditional stories; in fact, they explicitly create entirely new stories by mixing the traditional with the contemporary. McDougall theorizes this process within the concept of "ola (i) na moʻolelo," or "living moʻolelo,"[37] which emphasizes the responsibility of Hawaiian storytellers to "decolonize by reconnecting with ancestral moʻolelo and continuing to create our own moʻolelo, for when they are repeated over and over, allowed to live on our tongues and in our bodies, they will grow in mana, and become true by the power of belief" (McDougall, *Finding Meaning* 4). For Kuwada, telling moʻolelo using a variety of "mundane" or

marginalized genres—like comics—is an important political tool to get younger readers to engage with the power of their heritage (108-9). Telling stories in subversive and new ways, he argues, allows writers to "breathe not only our mana, but our possibilities into these mo'olelo, and give the readers and listeners a chance to see not only what has been, but also what could be" (Kuwada 116-117). As these scholars emphasize, attempting to perfectly preserve or reproduce an oral storytelling form in writing is neither possible nor productive. Instead, the focus should be on how successfully a writer adapts traditional forms in ways that further decolonial projects.

Ultimately, 'afakasi adaptation practices are more engaging for YALO's intended audience than attempting to maintain strict fidelity to traditional oral narratives and forms. In fact, those forms may be almost as alienating to Pasifika youth as wholly Western forms. In "Towards a New Oceania," Albert Wendt maintains that "usage determines authenticity….Our quest should not be for a revival of our past cultures but for the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly on our own pasts" (76). Rather than attempting to preserve a past that is virtually unrecognizable to the experiences of Pasifika youth, YALO texts epitomize what Wendt describes by drawing upon the past as a vehicle for navigating and empowering the present without glorifying or endorsing an impossible return to it. This approach is arguably more useful in exposing readers to cultural values and realistic avenues for applying those values in the contemporary moment. It is also important to acknowledge that YALO should not be considered a replacement for exposure to oral narratives, but rather a way to engage interest in traditions that can and should be explored more abundantly.

In the sections that follow, I will discuss some examples of YALO that do the political work of pushing back against colonial stereotypes and expectations of reality, revealing

possibilities for futures "free of the taint of colonialism." The first section examines creative reconstitutions of oral narrative forms from different cultural groups in Oceania, including Hawaiian moʻolelo, Samoan fāgogo and vernacular language constructions, and Chamorro tsamorita. These authors demonstrate how traditional oral forms can be deployed in contemporary contexts to address personal, cultural, and political concerns. In the final section, I uncover some of the ways that YALO authors are reinventing Indigenous stories to make them current and relevant to Oceanic youth.

Adapting Oral Forms

Moʻolelo as Methodology

Kānaka Maoli use moʻolelo in a variety of contexts as a highly valued narrative form. It encapsulates a multiplicity of meaning and function, including "story, tale, myth, history, tradition, literature, legend, journal, log, yarn, fable, essay, chronicle, record, article, minutes, as of a meeting" (Pukui and Elbert 254). The ability of moʻolelo to serve so many purposes makes it a valuable tool for conveying information and cultural knowledge. Kuwada explains that "in the Hawaiian understanding of moʻolelo, the lineal and generational quality of stories along with their capacity to carry culture really helps to explain how mana, the spiritual power and reverence that can be accumulated in all things, accrues to these stories as they are passed from person to person" (109). In addition to carrying culture, Kaiwipunikauikawēkiu Lipe notes that moʻolelo can also be used "to learn, teach, connect, and make sense of the world" when used as an "engaged practice and methodology for teaching and learning" (54). Lipe outlines several "modes of moʻolelo" that function as teaching and learning methodologies. I draw upon two that are particularly relevant to my examination of McDougall's *The Salt Wind: Ka Makani Paʻakai* and Kimo Armitage's *The Healers*: moʻolelo as mele, in which practitioners learn "about

academic subjects, life lessons, histories, genealogies, and identity" by performing mo‘olelo through song, chant, or dance; and mo‘olelo as narration or storytelling, which allows for the exchange of multiple perspectives and during which "a power, a privilege, and also a responsibility are gently but necessarily negotiated" (54). Both McDougall and Armitage blend mo‘olelo with Western forms of written literature in order to create emotional connections with their readers and legitimize Indigenous aesthetic and instructional forms. McDougall deploys a variety of oral storytelling strategies in two poems focused on childhood and adolescence from her collection *The Salt Wind: Ka Makani Pa‘akai*. Throughout the collection, McDougall experiments with form, frequently blending Western poetic forms with Hawaiian devices, and vice versa. While I would not classify the collection as a whole as YALO, several poems written in a youthful voice about youth experiences fit well into the genre.

In "What a Young, Single Makuahine Feeds You," McDougall describes, through food, the experience of a Hawaiian child living in poverty with a single mother. The poem takes the form of a list of 36 different (and yet tragically similar) meals that the family eats, all of which are not only cheap, but overwhelmingly canned, processed, and/or fried. The powerful list form of the poem is an example of helu, a meiwi (Hawaiian literary device) with a genealogy based in the oral tradition. ho‘omanawanui defines helu as a practice of repetitive listing commonly found in oli (chants) and used as a learning and memorization device as well as for its "aesthetic satisfaction" (Elbert, qtd. in ho‘omanawanui, *Voices* 42-3). Helu is used here by the narrator not only as a way to recount the repeated, unsatisfactory meals, but through that recounting to uncover the meaning of the final five lines of the poem. In them, the narrator explains that food

> from Uncle—
>
> no matter

which Uncle—

you eat whatever

Uncle brings (30)

Because of the emphasis on unhealthy, low-quality and repetitive meals, it is clear that the series of "Uncles" that the narrator's mother brings into their home are, like Western processed foods, individual manifestations of the cycle of poverty, dispossession, violence, and continued oppression of Hawaiian people. While this poem does not present a vision of a brighter future—in fact, it is quite dark—it does provide Hawaiian youth with similar experiences the ability to "see themselves" in literature, a valuable first step in initiating paths of resistance.

In "Emma, 1993," the child narrator references a well-known mo'olelo relating to the origin of the naupaka plant in order to help her to make sense of the heartbreak she watches in her mother, "sitting in the dark, looking out the open window" (line 2). Through listening, the narrator hears the answer to her mother's sadness:

I am so quiet that the night air

whispers a love story older than blood,

of two sad halves of a flower without

symmetry, separate—the frail naupaka,

immovable—about longing that lasts (lines 25-9)

This poem deploys the power of mo'olelo to teach understanding of others' pain, the story simple enough that even a child is able to grasp the heartbreak of the situation. It further underscores the relevance of and application for traditional stories in the lives of contemporary youth, promising, through mo'olelo as receptacles of knowledge, more effective ways for Hawaiian youth to cope with the complexities of life in a settler state. These poems underscore

the importance of writing as a resistant form of cultural preservation and expansion to fight ongoing colonization in Hawai‘i and Oceania. McDougall’s use of helu engages young readers with oral narrative, while the integration of mo‘olelo as a teaching tool honors Hawaiian practices and provides guidance for understanding and navigating contemporary problems. As a result, McDougall’s poetry enacts what she states as the purpose of Hawaiian writing in her critical work: “the role of the Kanaka Maoli writer to disrupt and overturn the colonial narrative is key to sustaining Hawaiian sovereignty and decolonization” (“From Uē to Kū‘ē” 52). McDougall’s command of both Hawaiian oral storytelling devices and Western poetic forms allows her to create an ‘afakasi poetry that draws on both traditions to connect emotionally with readers. As the examples I’ve shown here demonstrate, she creates this effect by Indigenizing Western poetic forms by disrupting their structures with devices from the Hawaiian oral tradition. In doing so, she reflects her own ‘afakasi subjectivity and provides a symbolic model for unsettling colonial structures through the practice of Indigenous knowledge.

Another Kanaka Maoli writer invested in both oral literature and the practice of Indigenous knowledge is Armitage, whose 2016 novel *The Healers* centers around inseparable cousins Pua and Keola, who are training to become traditional Hawaiian healers under the tutelage of their grandmother in Waialua, O‘ahu. The novel’s storytelling style is steeped in the oral tradition, interweaving mo‘olelo, mele (songs), oli (chants), and other elements into a complex work that honors Kānaka Maoli cultural values and histories alongside a rich tradition of intellectual and spiritual strength. In focusing on representations of young Hawaiian protagonists and engaging deeply with traditional oral forms of Hawaiian literature, the novel responds to an issue articulated by Kuwada in 2010:

> The efforts to reinvigorate and recirculate our ʻōlelo and moʻolelo have mainly and justifiably been aimed at young children, though attempts have been made to address the needs of the older generations as well. Yet this two-pronged approach dedicating our efforts towards our children and our parents actually threatens to create another lost generation….there are no versions of our moʻolelo explicitly aimed at those in these in-between generations, especially if they are not already avid readers. (107-8)

For Kānaka Maoli youth exposed to traditional oral forms in childhood, *The Healers* validates their cultural knowledge and offers a holistic representation of ʻŌiwi adolescence that balances cultural, spiritual, intellectual, and physical identity. On the other hand, while the novel's heavy engagement with oral storytelling forms may initially be unfamiliar to many diasporic, settler, or culturally unaware readers, Armitage makes these forms more accessible by incorporating them into the form of an English-language novel.

Like McDougall, Armitage infuses his writing with moʻolelo. Indeed, the entire novel is structured as a series of moʻolelo, each performing specific narrative and pedagogical functions. Because much of the narrative centers around Pua and Keola's training, Lipe's two functions of moʻolelo as mele and moʻolelo as storytelling are a good way to illuminate how moʻolelo can be used as a method for learning and teaching.

The cousins' Tutu (grandmother) frequently uses moʻolelo as storytelling in order to counsel her grandchildren. Rather than sit them down and offer explicit advice or directives, she instead tells moʻolelo about herself, family members, or ancestors. The moʻolelo about the family's ancestors are interspersed throughout the book as "A Story from Tutu," "Tutu tells a story," and "Tutu's Story" (vi). Each of these moʻolelo continue the story of their ancestor Kealo, who became a celebrated healer in Waialua, and from whom their healing legacy began.

At the same time, Tutu strategically concludes with a moral in each segment that is relevant to issues that the family faces in the present. For example, in "Tutu tells a story," the moʻolelo reveals that Kealo and her sister, Pinea, become acclaimed healers because they "always shared their knowledge" (64). Tutu concludes the moʻolelo with the moral that "if there are secrets, then no one wins" (64). This is important at this point in the novel, as both Pua and Keola are harboring unhealthy reactions to the arrival of Tiki, a youth fostered by a couple in the neighborhood, but unwilling to share their thoughts with Tutu because she is recovering from the death of her brother. At the conclusion of the mo ʻolelo, "Keola and Pua looked at each other. It was clear that this story was a way for Tutu to express her feelings; she wanted answers" (64). In this example, moʻolelo is employed by Tutu as a method for opening dialogue between family members and releasing tensions built up through secrecy. Having been raised by Tutu, both Keola and Pua are familiar with this approach to teaching through story and are able to read the deeper meaning behind the narrative.

The story also provides a powerful representation of moʻolelo as mele, which occurs when Keola is sent to Waiʻanae to petition a master healer for additional training. In order to demonstrate his worth as a potential student, he performs a series of oli that demonstrate his competency while simultaneously conveying humility and honor for the kumu (teacher). When the first chant fails to elicit an invitation to enter, Keola assesses his performance:

> First, he had praised the land and surrounding features. Then he had praised the healing skills of the kahuna by recalling bits of an old chant that talked about how different illnesses were connected to different islands. To have seen the different islands was a metaphor for having mastered the curing of all these sicknesses. Keola could do two things. He could do another chant or he could leave. (98)

Determined to study under this new kumu, Keola composes and performs a second chant that is also left unanswered, and provides an even longer assessment of the chant and its meaning. Before attempting his third and final attempt, Keola expresses his understanding that his new kumu "was demanding a chant that was worthy of his status. [He] was being tested already" (100). In response, Keola draws on the family gods to aid him during his final petition, which is ultimately granted. Keola's challenge demonstrates the performative nature of learning through mo'olelo. He engages intellectually with the composition of each oli, learning and improving with each new performance.

What is significant about this part of the novel is that Armitage is careful to explain some of the kaona (hidden meaning)[38] of the oli after they are uttered, a feature usually missing from oral narratives. This is important for adolescent readers who might otherwise skim or ignore the chants as too difficult to decipher; by uncovering the meaning behind the chant, Armitage reveals not only Keola's intellectual ability, but the depth and layering of meaning that is present in Hawaiian oral forms. While this means that adolescent readers do not have to put in as much intellectual work to understand the oli as written, explaining their meaning is an important way to build engagement and appreciation for the form. It is important to note also that another way Armitage attempts to make the novel easier to read is by presenting all of the chants in the novel in fully translated English, rather than as a side-by-side combination of English and ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. That being said, despite Armitage's efforts to make these forms accessible through explication and translation, this is still a complex text best suited for older adolescents, and will most likely require some scaffolding for readers unfamiliar with Hawaiian oral forms. Nonetheless, *The Healers* is an important addition to YALO in that it begins to fill the void in Hawaiian narratives for adolescent readers.

Fully exploring the complex multi-layering of oral forms in McDougall and Armitage's work requires a far deeper engagement than I am able achieve in this short section, but the elements that I have discussed underscore their commitment to honoring oral literature while also ensuring that it is accessible to adolescent readers. In creating ʻafakasi moʻolelo that blend Kanaka Maoli and Western literary forms, McDougall and Armitage demonstrate that moʻolelo are powerful vessels for conveying knowledge, connecting with others, and enacting teaching and learning.

Fāgogo and the Samoan vernacular

Sia Figiel's *Where We Once Belonged* and *Girl in the Moon Circle* have been frequently held up by literary critics as examples of how Indigenous oral forms can manifest in print, and I will illustrate here how her 2016 work *Freelove* continues these practices for adolescent readers. While I do not consider *Where We Once Belonged* to be a true YALO text,[39] examining it alongside *Freelove* reveals how Figiel's use of oral forms of storytelling has expanded and shifted in powerful ways to address the needs of Pasifika youth.

Figiel has said that one of her purposes in *Where We Once Belonged* is to push back against a lack of realistic or humanizing portrayals of Samoan women in the novels of Albert Wendt. This is done through frequent portrayals of women in circles, singing and dancing together and sharing stories and genealogies. Early on, Alofa Filiga describes herself and the other girls sitting in a circle, where "we counted and recounted all our relatives, over and over….We knew *everyone.* Of course we did! We're girls…and girls knew everything there was to know in Malaefou" (22-3). It also uses fale aitu, a form of Samoan cultural satire, to critique the creation of inaccurate representations of Samoan people by Western anthropologists like Margaret Mead and Derek Freeman (Keown 170-171). This satire is executed in untranslated

Samoan vernacular, a key practice throughout the novel that Keown describes as "a more general tendency, among contemporary 'postcolonial' Pacific writers, to make far fewer concessions for monolingual English-speaking readers" (170). Figiel's use of the vernacular is similarly important because she uses the informal "k" register of Samoan language that is used in everyday speech, but is never used in schools, church, or other formal contexts—like writing—that usually call for the formal "t" register. By putting the "k" in writing, Figiel privileges the language spoken most comfortably by her adolescent characters, subverting cultural expectations of formality and accessibility to writing. Finally, the character of Siniva—a university dropout and anticolonial activist—uses her role as the village storyteller to engage in fāgogo that subvert Western knowledge systems and education. She tells the village youth cosmogonies, myths, and histories about the founding of the village and Samoa that resist attitudes and codes of conduct enforced through colonial institutions like Christianity. Unfortunately, Siniva's suicide and Alofa's resulting disconnection from the village forecast a dark future filled with continued cultural loss and oppression for Samoans. This ending, that leaves Alofa unmoored and uncertain, may perhaps be more disempowering than motivating for Pasifika youth.

Freelove extends the work of *Where We Once Belonged*, critiquing contemporary village mores and practices as colonial, Christian constructs through a forbidden relationship between a teen and her science teacher. In this book, however, Figiel doesn't decry Western knowledges and education; the character of Ioage Viliamu, Sia's science teacher-turned-lover, has advanced Western degrees in the sciences but chooses to teach his village students Samoan concepts alongside the knowledge he learned in University. He does this bilingually in the classroom, so that Western and Samoan concepts are explained most effectively in the appropriate language. Sia considers this "mind-blowing to a 17 1/2 year old girl like me. Someone who's always been

told that what is written in the books is palagi knowledge…which implies somehow that it is superior to our own ways of understanding" (56). The oral nature of Ioage's classroom instruction fosters a love of knowledge and intellectual inquiry in Sia and resists privileging one knowledge system (e.g., Western science) over another.

Ioage also shares fāgogo with Sia throughout their day of lovemaking that explain the origins of their village, as well as pre-Christian religious and sexual practices. These fāgogo function as overt critiques of the ways Christianity has transformed village life, but simultaneously reveal how villagers have continued to practice their traditional beliefs within the parameters of "acceptable" Christian behavior as a form of resistance. Tuiatua Tamasese describes fāgogo in terms of language, explaining that "fāgogo bespeak[s] the passing on of physical and cultural life from generation to generation in closeness and alofa. It is an image of intimacy, of sharing, of love, of connection and communication. It imparts mana and shares the feau (i.e. a message) between generations" (Efi 59). In telling these stories as fāgogo, Ioage not only increases the intimacy between himself and Sia, but also draws them both closer to their ancestors, their village, and their culture.

Like *Where We Once Belonged, Freelove* makes extensive use of the Samoan language. However, this is a true bilingual text, with every word presented in Samoan translated into English, perhaps because Figiel acknowledges that a large portion of her young audience is diasporic and unable to understand the Samoan language. As in *Where We Once Belonged*, the use of the informal, speakerly "k" dialect is used liberally, continuing to resist the rules of linguistic propriety. As Sia and Ioage's relationship warms, the characters engage in the Samoan oratory practice of exchanging puns and wordplay to flirt with one another. Ultimately, this practice functions as a form of foreplay, which mirrors their physical liaison as consensual and

enjoyable. Inosia's enjoyment of her first sexual encounter is an important project of the book, which attempts to reinscribe sex for Samoan women as fulfilling, meaningful, and pleasurable rather than dirty, painful, and/or an act of duty that is for purposes of procreation only.

While there are many more examples, a final important aspect of the novel that I would like to highlight is the exchange of histories and genealogies between the lovers to foster simultaneous intellectual and sexual awakenings in Sia. These knowledges transform her from an adolescent into an adult in a matter of hours, capable of making informed decisions for motherhood, her career, and life path. This transformation resists Western constructions of 'the adolescent' as intellectually lazy, engaging in hormonal sex, and being hedonistically unable to make rational decisions. If *Where We Once Belonged* functions as a primarily critical novel without much hope for future generations, Figiel's latest novel is filled with hope, imagining a future where Pasifika youth are empowered and self-actualized, who know their culture and history and are able to engage successfully with other knowledges, confident in the value of their own Indigenous worldview. It also imagines a Samoan culture that is more critical of the ways colonization has fundamentally eroded traditional belief systems and practices.

Tsamorita and Cultural Construction

In this section, I draw on the poetry and stories in the collection *Chamoru Childhood* as well as the short story "Yes I Am" by Chamorro writer Tanya Taimanglo to discuss how Chamorros use one of their traditional storytelling forms, the tsamorita, in contemporary poetry and short stories as a way to affirm cultural values and articulate decolonial agendas. The tsamorita is a collective poetic form that relies on impromptu call and response to complete the story. Chamorro poet and scholar Craiz Santos Perez describes it as "an extemporaneous folksong in a dialogue form" that, while nearly extinct in its traditional oral form due to language

loss (153-4), has been revitalized in written literature by contemporary Chamorro poets. These poets create texts that resonate intertextually with one another, "[creating] an imaginative community through which these poets commune within their intertextual roots to resist colonialism and strengthen Chamorro culture" (158). Monique Storie's article "'That's So Chamorro': Representations of Culture in Chamorro Realistic Fiction" outlines several touchpoints of culture and representation that give Chamorro literature a voice distinct from other cultural literary traditions. These touchpoints will provide intertextual links within the primary texts.

Some aspects of Chamorro literature that Storie identifies include imagery, such as landmarks, place names, local flora and fauna, and descriptions of distinctly Chamorro cultural details (85). She also identifies the use of Chamorro archetypes, such as the Chamorro grandmother or cousin as frequently used by Chamorro writers (85). She argues that "grandmothers play an important role in Chamorro childhood. The grandmother archetype is a strong-willed woman who manages a household with a firm hand but shows her love through small acts like cooking" (Storie 85). Poems within *Chamoru Childhood* intertextually emphasize the importance of grandmothers as the center of the family unit in Chamorro culture. Josette Quinata shares her memories of growing up at "Nana's house. / It meant so much to everyone" (9). She ends the poem with the declaration that even though she has left Guam, "you can't take home away from me. Home is Nana. Home is Grandma" (28). In Charissa Agnon's poem "Little Mamma," the narrator names herself "little mamma, / Right-Hand-Man / to my Nana" (2-4), who "works long hours / at the mart" (5-6). The narrator takes pride in her identity as Nana's helper, which is reinforced by her use of Chamorro language:

When she comes home after

a long, hard workday…

She pats me on the back

and with a tired smile will say,

“Ai adei haga-hu, si yu’us ma’ase.

I am very blessed to have you”

and all my frustrations just melt away. (23-31)

This image of a grandmother’s voice as a source of identity is echoed in Rebecca Leon Guerrero’s poem “Glass Louvers”: “all I could do was listen to aunties and gramma talk / They usually talked in Chamorro / I liked the sound of their voices and the way their faces moved when they talked” (36). Like the narrator in “Little Mamma,” the narrator in “Glass Louvers” finds comfort in hearing her grandmother speaking Chamorro, marking grandmothers as important figures of language and cultural transmission as well as playing integral roles in establishing Chamorro identity in their families.

Storie also argues that appropriate expressions of inafa‘maolek, family, and respect are crucial characteristics of Chamorro literature (86). Storie describes inafa‘maolek as embodying cooperation, communalism, support, and appropriate behavior as a member of the family unit (86). Perez similarly characterizes it as a cultural value that emphasizes “harmony, reciprocity, and cooperation in sustaining communal and ecological relationships” (163). Respect for elders is an aspect of inafa‘maolek that is deeply important in Chamorro culture (Storie 88). One good example of an intertextual respect for elders is in “The Back of the Pickup” by Evelyn San Miguel Flores (16-22). After a group of children is scolded by a police officer for being too rowdy in the back of a pickup truck, a group of cousins must face Uncle Joe’s wrath: “We’re all quiet. We know better than to speak while Uncle Joe is giving his speech” (22). This emphasis

on respect for elders is echoed in Taimanglo's "Yes I Am," when Sirena chooses not to respond rudely to remarks by older Chamorros at a college Guam Club party: "the ingrained custom of respecting your elders pinned her tongue into place" (53). These very similar accounts of respect for elders through listening and remaining silent resonate with one another, reinforcing cultural values for younger readers. That so many poems within the same collection reinforce the same values intertextually points to more than a simple thread of shared themes, but rather a collective effort on the part of both poets and editors to privilege and reinforce Chamorro values and knowledges important for youth identity formation.

Perez argues that contemporary poets also engage in tsamorita as a political act that affirms and strengthens Chamorro resistance to ongoing occupation by the United States (156). Several poets in *Chamoru Childhood* respond to images of trees and the English language as symbols of cultural loss in the face of American imperialism. Joseph Borja's "An Ode to My Family" describes his family as "A tree whose leaves are dying young" (2) because his grandparents gave in to colonial pressures: "The Americanus they did you wrong / See Nana and Tata / They fed you English and took away your song" (10-12). Borja later laments the loss of Chamorro language, telling them that "What you have lost I cannot save" (20). Similar images are used by Destiny Tedtaotao, who describes her family as a tree with "cringing roots" (1) because of American colonial pressures that state "Girl, don't bother trying to learn Chamorro, English is the language you need to know" (6). Tedtaotao's poem functions as a response to Borja's by shifting from a passive focus on loss and blaming previous generations to taking control of her own ability to learn/recover the language in the present day: she includes a stanza in untranslated Chamorro that transitions into a final stanza that shifts inaction into active resistance: "Guåhan / You will rise again / Liberated" (19-21). Together, these poets

communally express their desire for decolonization, critiquing the colonial structures that continue to disrupt their ability to speak their language and practice their culture.

These examples of contemporary Chamorro writers engaged in the production of modern tsamorita demonstrate the resilience of oral forms and their generative power in resisting colonization and transmitting cultural knowledge and values for young readers. Perez articulates the power of this resurgent practice and its importance for Chamorros:

> The tsamorita tradition is very much alive despite centuries of colonialism and the resultant changes in Chamorro life and aesthetic practices. Contemporary Chamorro poets have rearticulated the tsamorita form of an oral dialogue into an intertextual call-and-response. This interweaving creates an imaginative communality, in which Chamorro poets braid their poems to create a new communal situation. From this space, these poets protect Chamorro culture and defend against ongoing colonialism. Moreover, this braiding heals what was once deemed severed by connecting contemporary Chamorro poets to their Before Time Ancestors and to the work of Puntan and Fu'una, who wove their embodied songs to create the world. (164)

Engaging in contemporary tsamorita pushes back against Western conceptions of the "solitary author," demonstrating instead what communal authorship of identity and culture looks like. Further, the presence of two youth writers in *Chamoru Childhood*—Jesse Tedtaotao and Samantha Barnett—underscores how adolescents can and should contribute to literary production in Oceania. It also envisions a future in which children are strongly linked to their parents and ancestors through storytelling, breaking cycles of dispossession and cultural loss.

Adapting Oral Narratives

Engaging Contemporary Issues

In addition to challenging stereotypes about Pasifika youth and providing important representations of fa'afafine youth, the mythological elements of Wendt Young's *Telesā* series powerfully highlight critical social and environmental issues in contemporary Samoa while simultaneously providing an avenue for exploring the role that culture can play in the lives of Samoan adolescents. About halfway through *The Covenant Keeper*, Leila discovers that, like her mother, she is telesā, capable of controlling the elements. Young explains that the concept of telesā was drawn from Samoan stories:

> Yes there are 'real' spirit women in Samoan mythology, called 'teine Sa' and Telesa is only one of them…My curiosity about the teine Sa women is what led me to use these original myths as a springboard for my novels...The Telesa women in my books are very much my own interpretation of the myths and complete fiction, as in, existing only in Lani's head… I encourage all those interested in the 'real' teine Sa women, to ask their elders and learn more about our mythology. ("Q&A")

Samoan mythology is full of tales of aitu, or spirits. As a subset of aitu, teine sā are spirit women feared for their ability possess any human who offends them. They are also known for their beauty and a tendency to seduce men, particularly foreigners. They are prone to fits of petty jealousy, and will often possess or injure anyone who has light hair (considered beautiful) or wears her hair down (considered flaunting). Similarly, anyone who wanders near their territory or bathes in their streams without permission could end up possessed or injured (Goodman 470). Because of their reputation for severe punishment, teine sā are incredibly feared and rarely

spoken of. For Samoans, it is a topic to be avoided because of the spiritual retribution that might follow as a result of discussing it.

A striking difference between Young's portrayal and traditional conceptions of teine sā is that Young represents telesā as an entire category of elemental spirit women. However, according to historical and cultural sources, Telesā is in fact the name of a well-known and particularly feared teine sā who protects a region on the island of Upolu. According to a high-ranking Samoan interviewed by anthropologist Richard Goodman in 1971,

> Telesā gets angry at people who say bad words, or at any girl who goes into the forest and puts down her hair. If a boy climbs a tree and calls the name of someone he sees far away, Telesā will get very angry. If you go to swim at the river at the village of L, and if after swimming you come up and try to comb your hair near the river, this will cause her to become angry. People who do not believe in her and who go there and do anything they like will be hit by her. (471)

While many of these actions seem nonsensical or petty to outsiders, an understanding of the ways humility and respect work in Samoan culture helps to illuminate their significance. For example, the references to girls who "put down their hair" or "try to comb [their] hair near the river" suggest culturally that a girl is proud of her beauty and flaunting her good looks and sexuality (Mageo 125). Because humility and chastity is highly valued in Samoan culture, overt pride in one's appearance is frowned upon and proper humility enforced by Telesā. Similarly, swearing and hailing someone from a distance (rather than respectfully running to catch up) are considered arrogant and worthy of punishment.

Belief in teine sā such as Telesā is still active in Samoa today, and so Young overtly alters many traditional teine sā characteristics while playing on the forbidden nature of oral

tradition concerning them. Indeed, the characters in the book who are telesā, Leila included, are very much mortal rather than spirits able to possess humans. Their powers of physical elemental control (fire/earth, wind/weather, or water/ocean) are also very different from the spiritual power of teine sā. However, the reactions of Leila's relatives when asked about her mother are representative enough of reality to illustrate that Young draws heavily on legend in the series. When Leila attempts to talk about her mother with her Uncle Tuala and Aunty Matile, Tuala stresses cryptically that "'you will accept that there are some things we do not speak of. Ever. This is a God-fearing house. This land does not belong to the spirits and myths of the past. We are Christians and we will not have anything to do with such beliefs here'" (*Telesā* 20-21). These interactions that Leila has with relatives underscore an important conflict in culture for youth: how to reconcile pre-contact religious beliefs with Christianity, which was adopted by Samoans and most Pacific Islanders wholesale during the colonial period.

Nearly every aspect of the telesā remythologized by Young in the series connects readers to contemporary Samoan issues and culture. Specifically, Young's reconstitution of teine sā as telesā spirit women with power over the elements is an effective way to highlight current Samoan issues of environmentalism, sexual repression and abuse, and cultural continuity. She explicitly states this purpose in the Acknowledgements section of *When Water Burns*: "If nothing else, I hope this book can get more of us talking about issues that we are, too often, far too quiet about" (244). Highlighting these contemporary issues through the medium of story is another way that Young is able to engage Samoan youth with current issues while also raising awareness with her diasporic teen readers.

Bridging Past and Present Through Story

Parker's Niuhi Shark Saga is a trilogy that follows the experiences of Zader, a boy allergic to water and yet strangely drawn to the ocean. *One Boy, No Water*; *One Shark, No Swim*; and *One Truth, No Lie* are novels primarily set in the fictional O'ahu town of Lauele, although Zader eventually ventures into the depths of the ocean and visits shores around the world. The series celebrates small-town island life and the interactions between local residents and a wide variety of figures from mo'olelo. In creating these interactions, Parker also constructs her own mo'olelo that humorously and realistically addresses issues of bullying, identity and belonging, environmentalism, and the power of art and 'ohana. Ultimately, the series is about "eventually choosing to define yourself and how you want to live your life despite what others want you to do" (Parker, "Myth"), which Parker accomplishes by remythologizing a wide variety of figures from mo'olelo who push Zader to develop a new 'afakasi consciousness.

Zader's character initially manifests many of the identity struggles faced by 'afakasi youth in Oceania. In addition to being allergic to water (requiring the use of a raw sugar and coconut oil scrub to bathe), Zader is also adopted, and people are often uncomfortable meeting his black-eyed gaze. As a result, he is either ignored or bullied by his peers at school. Initially, he sees himself as "a freak" (*One Boy* 33), expressing his differences as a curse: "I pretended I didn't care about things like going to the beach or playing soccer without worrying about sprinklers coming on or having to carry a stupid umbrella and wear shoes everywhere I go. But the truth was I hated being different in ways that made me special. Special is way overrated" (*One Shark* 10-11). Zader initially frames his uniqueness as a liability because he is unaware that he is 'afakasi, both human and shark, part mortal and part divine. As he begins to learn more

about his heritage, however, he learns to accept his mixed identity through a series of experiences that force him to negotiate relationships with both sides of his family.

Zader's character development is facilitated through Parker's adaptation of shark mo'olelo. The story revolves around the existence of "Niuhi sharks," supernatural beings Parker conceived by adapting mo'olelo about humans who can shapeshift into sharks and shark akua who can shapeshift into humans ("Myth"). The word "niuhi" refers to a "man-eating shark…any Hawaiian shark longer than 3.5 m" (Pukui & Elbert 267), and Parker combines this figure of a large, man-eating shark with oral narratives about shapeshifting, describing Niuhi as "sharks that are self-aware in their role as predators and can appear as people on land" ("Myth"). We also learn that Niuhi sharks are the children of Kanaloa, the god of the ocean. Parker draws strongly upon the mo'olelo of Nana'ue in her construction of Zader. In the mo'olelo, Nana'ue is conceived of a human mother and the shark-god Kamohoali'i. Prior to the birth,

> [Kamohoali'i] particularly cautioned the mother never to let him be fed on animal flesh of any kind, as he would be born with a dual nature, and with a body that he could change at will. In time Kalei was delivered of a fine healthy boy, apparently the same as any other child, but he had, besides the normal mouth of a human being, a shark's mouth on his back between the shoulder blades. (Nakuina 257)

After consuming meat despite Kamohoali'i's warning, Nana'ue develops a taste for human flesh, and eventually must be killed to stop him from devouring more people. Aside from small alterations, Zader is very similar to Nana'ue: he is forbidden from eating raw meat of any kind (well-cooked meat is fine), he can shapeshift into a shark when he comes in contact with water, and while in human form has a large, triangle-shaped birthmark on his back that is reminiscent of the mouth on Nana'ue's back.

Despite these similarities between Zader and Nana‘ue, Parker is clear that “the series is not a retelling of Nanaue” (“Myth”). Instead, through creative remythologizing, Parker reveals in *One Truth, No Lie* that Nana‘ue is actually Zader’s cousin, and the reason why Zader was adopted and hidden is because Kanaloa decreed that all male human-Niuhi must be killed at birth to prevent another conflict between humans and Niuhi. Parker reveals this information by retelling the Nana‘ue mo‘olelo twice: at the end of *One Shark, No Swim* by Uncle Kahana, Lauele’s shark kahuna, and at the beginning of *One Truth, No Lie* by Ka-Lei-O-Mano (Kalei), Zader’s Niuhi uncle. While both versions frame the story as a tragedy, they provide different perspectives on the causes and consequences of Nana‘ue’s death. From Uncle Kahana’s human point of view, feeding Nana‘ue the meat he desired was an act of misguided love, and the only way to consequently stop Nana‘ue from eating humans was to kill him because of his nature (*One Shark* 286-7). In Kalei’s version, Nana‘ue’s condition was caused by human disobedience and untrustworthiness, a result of his family’s broken promise “to raise him human and never let him taste flesh” (*One Truth* 22). Likewise, he suggests that the death of Nana‘ue was regrettable rather than inevitable, occurring while “offshore we watched and could do nothing” (*One Truth* 24). According to Kalei, the consequences sparked by Nana‘ue’s incorrect upbringing forced Niuhi into exile, since “no human trusted a Niuhi after that…even our own human kin forced us to leave” (*One Truth* 24). The two versions of the mo‘olelo uncover the reasons behind human fear of Niuhi and Niuhi distrust of humans, which explains why “Niuhi and humankind don’t mix” (*One Truth* 24). In choosing to retell the mo‘olelo from two different viewpoints, Parker demonstrates the importance of the Kānaka Maoli cultural value of makawalu, or multiple perspectives. ho‘omanawanui explains that makawalu “allows for multiple levels and new insights of understanding” (*Voices* xl), and providing the two perspectives on Nana‘ue helps

readers to understand the danger that Zader potentially poses to his human family as well as the justification for Kanaloa's decree against male-Niuhi children. It also contextualizes the tensions that Zader must navigate as an individual with claim to both perspectives.

It is in the final book, *One Truth, No Lie,* that Zader is forced to confront the conflicting elements of his mixed identity. After his first attempt to transform into a shark, Zader discusses his heritage with 'Ilima, a supernatural being who manifests to humans throughout the series as a dog. She explains to him that the reason he has been hidden on land all of his life is because the destructive behavior of Nana'ue strained the relationship between humans and Niuhi:

> "Why does The Man with Too Many Teeth [Kalei] want to hurt me?"
>
> "Because in his eyes you're an abomination that has to die."
>
> *So much for sugar-coating it. Even the monsters think I'm a freak.*
>
> "Why?"
>
> "The simplest answer is because your grandfather Kanaloa declared all male Niuhi-humans kapu [forbidden]."
>
> "Kanaloa? The Hawaiian god of the sea?" I yelped.
>
> "Yes. He's your grandfather. Keep up," Ilima snapped.
>
> "He's real?"
>
> "We all are." (*One Truth* 27).

The "we" referenced here by 'Ilima includes all of the legendary beings hinted at throughout the series, including menehune, 'aumakua, and akua.[40] It also includes Zader, whose identity as Niuhi means that he is also the descendant of a powerful akua. However, his inner dialogue (Parker's italics) reveals that his belief in the reality of akua and other supernatural beings is still alienating because of his 'afakasi heritage. Zader's inner struggle is intensified when he is

discovered by Kalei and forced, in shark form, to bite off his brother Jay's leg in order to save Jay's life. As a result, he is banned from Lauele and his human family, a condition imposed by Kanaloa as a compromise that allows him to live despite the kapu that prohibits his existence.

It is not until he begins his apprenticeship with Aunty Ake, away from both his human and Niuhi families, that he begins to reconcile the conflict by fully embracing his divine and human characteristics. In doing so, he is able to enact transformative change as an environmental activist and free himself from exile. Aunty Ake trains Zader to use his shark form, and provides him with resources to develop his artistic talent. It is through this training that he realizes "maybe being a shark isn't so bad" (*One Truth* 130), and that his human ability to create art has the potential to influence other humans. Zader uses this new understanding of his identity to become a mālama ʻāina activist. hoʻomanawanui explains that the concept of mālama ʻāina encapsulates "the importance of caring for the land because it is family, because it is sacred, because it is life, not just because 'going green' is in vogue" (*Voices* 90). Zader's activism reflects an understanding of the ocean as sacred and life-giving, attempting to convey this understanding to others through his art. While his Niuhi heritage allows him to see firsthand what human pollution is doing to the ocean, Zader's human heritage and time spent living on land teaches him that helping others experience environmental destruction is an effective method to encourage them to mālama ʻāina. He explains to Pua that "humans only love what they can understand, what they can see with their own eyes and feel in their hearts. My art gives them a reason to care. And if enough people care, then change is possible" (*One Truth* 253). Zader's newfound power and confidence allow him to extend the Hawaiian concept of mālama ʻāina beyond Hawaiʻi and Oceania, practicing it throughout the world.

It is at this point, when he embraces the two parts of his heritage, that Zader becomes a demigod trickster figure, making use of his shapeshifting abilities to scout marine areas with environmental devastation, and then using his human understanding to connect with people through guerrilla-style art. The artwork is created in secret over a period of time, and then installed overnight in an area with high visibility and rhetorical impact. Needing help to mount his first mural on the doors to an unethical fish market, Zader makes a deal with locals by paying them a great deal of Kanaloa's money. When questioned about this choice by Aunty Ake, Zader tells her, "Legends have to start somewhere" (175). In actively choosing to become a legend, Zader's activism participates in ola nā moʻolelo, creating a new, living moʻolelo that gains mana (power) and "become[s] true by the power of belief" through continued retelling (McDougall, *Finding Meaning* 4). Like any good trickster, Zader makes use of all the resources available to him—while in this example he is technically fulfilling Kanaloa's directive to develop his art and "study oceans—currents, ecosystems, geography" (*One Truth* 109), his overzealous use of the treasury is perhaps not what Kanaloa had in mind.

The sense of purpose that Zader develops as a result of embracing his multiple identities gives him the confidence to ask Kanaloa to rescind his exile from Lauele. After returning to deep-sea Hohonukai (Kanaloa's palace), Zader explains to his Niuhi mother, Pua, that he has "figured out how to bridge the Niuhi and human world" (*One Truth* 251) by embracing his ʻafakasi identity that belongs to both: "I can take shark form or human form. I'm not really one or the other. But I think I've found a way to make a difference in the world" (*One Truth* 253). His newfound understanding of the power and possibility inherent in the tension between his mixed heritages leads him to reject the binary identity model he's been forced into (Niuhi or human), telling Pua that "it's not about choosing who's in my family. It's about being able to

spend time with both sides. If I'm going to continue to build bridges between Niuhi and humans, I'm going to have to return to my old life" (*One Truth* 254). Zader's new understanding of his identity recognizes that choosing to be either human or Niuhi limits his ability to enact meaningful change in the world; to fully activate his power, he must embrace both parts of his identity by interacting with both sides of his family. To accomplish this goal, however, he must convince Kanaloa, not Pua.

Throughout the series, Kanaloa works from the background, never physically manifesting until the third book. He initially appears to an unsuspecting Zader as an octopus, testing to see whether Zader will prey upon or rescue a helpless sea animal stranded away from the water. He later reveals himself to Zader by transforming from octopus to human form, noting that "I find the most humble creatures are often overlooked" (*One Truth* 158). According to Aluli and McGregor, the octopus is one manifestation of Kanaloa's kino lau, or sacred body forms (235). Parker's depiction of Kanaloa is respectful of his power as the god of the ocean, but as Zader's grandfather he is also both wise and kind. While he validates Zader's mixed identity and grants his wish to return to Lauele, Kanaloa is also unapologetic about exiling Zader and forcing him to undergo training with Aunty Ake, stating that "I needed a tool I can use to make changes" (*One Truth* 260). Kanaloa is portrayed as benevolent but also practical about the urgent need to address ongoing devastation to the world's oceans as a result of human pollution. It is in this portrayal of Kanaloa that Parker's remythologizing is most powerful; not only does it reinscribe Kanaloa's power in the present, but it gives him an active presence concerned with and working towards solving contemporary issues that are linked with Indigenous values such as mālama ʻāina.

In the same way that Zader functions as a bridge between human and Niuhi, Parker's storytelling links ancient and contemporary mo'olelo, rendering Kānaka Maoli values, beliefs, and practices relevant for adolescent readers. Zader's relatability as an 'afakasi teenager and his choice to harness his mixed identity as a trickster figure also provides a model for adolescent empowerment and creativity in engaging with current issues. Parker's portrayal of Kanaloa as an active presence in our contemporary world enriches our conceptions of the ocean, enhancing our understanding and care for one of the world's most important natural resources.

Confronting Stereotypes and Diasporic Struggle

Tulia Thompson's middle-grade novel *Josefa and the Vu* centers the experience of 6th grade Josefa, the youngest child in a Fijian immigrant family living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Josefa is bullied at school for being overweight and out of shape by one of his white classmates, Jack, whose father also happens to own the factory where Josefa's father works. When Jack and his father visit Josefa's home to discuss issues at the factory, Josefa notices that Jack's father "sounded just like an older version of his son" (236), underscoring that legacies of racial and economic privilege are often intergenerational, and that children learn to dismiss Indigenous peoples from their parents. During the visit, Jack steals the family tabua, a sacred whale's tooth passed down through Josefa's mataqali, or tribe, for generations.

The loss of the tabua results in a series of unfortunate events for the family, including a hailstorm of cockroaches, Josefa's older brother being racially profiled and arrested for a local crime, and his father being fired from working at the factory. Josefa is visited by a Vu, a shapeshifting ancestral spirit who takes the form of a shark or a Fijian warrior. The Vu's ability to shapeshift between shark and warrior forms has many parallels to the Fijian shark-god Dakuwaqa, who takes the same two forms in Fijian lore as a fierce protector of fisherman and the

island of Kadavu. The Vu explains the importance of the tabua to the family as a protective talisman that guards against an ancient tevolo, or evil spirit: “When the tabua is given within our family, stories are given along with it. These stories are part of our people and belong to you and your children in turn” (805). History and remembrance thus become agents of protection and a source of maintaining identity and purpose from one generation to the next.

The Vu further explains that the tevolo targeting Josefa’s family appeared in Fiji during the mid-nineteenth century with the first large group of European settlers to the islands, where it “began to spread conflict and strife” (loc 848) through disease, death, and cultural changes. Thus described, the tevolo is symbolic of colonial forces that devastated Indigenous peoples throughout Oceania both physically and ideologically. The Vu is quick to emphasize, however, that “The tabua carries so much family history and sacredness, that the spirit is unable to harm it…the evil spirit is powerful, but not as powerful as the interwoven strands of our family line” (851). This declaration re-emphasizes the importance of family stories and genealogy as protection against Indigenous identity loss.

The plot comes to a head during a school field trip to a local nature preserve, which is dangerously flammable because of an ongoing drought in the area. Josefa and his friend, Ming, follow Jack into the woods, where he begins to light fireworks with one of his troublemaking friends. In their attempt to stop the fireworks, the forest is set ablaze, and the four youth are trapped between the raging fire and a cliff leading to the ocean below. During the chaos, the tevolo appears to Josefa as a giant dog, calling himself Cu Sith, a reference to the mythological hellhound and harbinger of death from Scottish folklore. Seizing the opportunity to kill Josefa, Cu Sith says, “I have come after you because this way I can ruin your whole family in one go. Throughout history, destroying children has been the most devastating and effective way of

destroying a people" (1430). Cu Sith's declaration underscores the damage that occurs when Indigenous youth are not taught their language, culture, and history. Without the protection that they provide to identity, youth (and by extension, entire communities) are vulnerable to attack. With the help of the Vu and Josefa's own ingenuity and bravery, the tabua is recovered from Jack, Cu Sith retreats in defeat, and the children are saved from the fire. Interestingly, the crisis reveals that each of the children in the story are influenced by their own ancestral stories. Jack's troublemaking turns out to have been exacerbated by small, leprechaun-like creatures that egg him on and literally fan the flames of the fire, while Ming, who is Chinese, is saved and the fire is ultimately quenched by a large, benevolent Lung, a Chinese water dragon. The Vu explains to Josefa that "just as you have me as a guardian spirit and I watch over you, other peoples have different creatures that watch over them" (815-828). Thompson's remythologizing of Fijian as well as Chinese and European figures powerfully demonstrates the effect that our cultural stories have on our behavior, and that choosing to be influenced by the wrong stories can have dangerous consequences for everyone. The novel ends as Josefa's grandfather tells him that in "in some form, the battle will continue…even though the tabua will offer your family some protection, Cu Sith knows that there is a warrior in this generation who has the power to destroy him for good" (1881). Through the process of learning his family history, Josefa is transformed from a chubby, insecure immigrant child into an empowered, decolonial warrior.

While Josefa and the Vu is a good example of how YALO can participate in undermining stereotypes and creating positive representations of Pasifika youth, it is important to point out that it is also a text that privileges Pasifika settler concerns (such as immigration and adjusting to life in a new country) at the expense of Māori concerns. Thompson's creative relocation of a variety of cultural stories into the Māori space of Aotearoa misses an opportunity for those

stories to interact with existing Māori stories linked to the places in the book. As a result, the absence of Māori stories in a book set in Aotearoa perpetuates settler myths of minority harmony.

Settler Allyship Through Indigenous Story

Healey's *Guardian of the Dead* explores how settler youth can engage with Indigenous stories as a vehicle for confronting their settler subjectivity and developing allyship. Like *Josefa and the Vu*, the novel is steeped in folklore, this time a mixture of Māori and Greek mythology. The main character, Ellie, is a white settler attending a prestigious preparatory school in Christchurch. She soon learns that her best friend Kevin is the target of a local patupaiarehe, and that the greater population of patupaiarehe[41] are attempting to gain immortality through a complex plot that requires killing a large portion of Aotearoa New Zealand's population through a series of massive earthquakes. Throughout the novel, Healey uses stories literally and symbolically to illustrate the tension between Ellie's desire to help and her struggle to understand her responsibility as a settler on Indigenous land. Through her interactions with a part-Māori classmate named Mark, Ellie learns that she has latent magical talent, which means that if her power is awakened, she can be trained to use it. This power is mediated by belief, which literally changes the way that she sees the world. For Ellie, who has grown up with an awareness of Māori folklore but is taking courses in classical Greek mythology, this is initially a jarring experience. Ellie sees the land of Aotearoa for the first time through the lens of Māori story as she flies over the country on a plane from South Island (which is the demigod Maui's canoe) to the North Island (known to the Māori as Te Ika a Maui, a giant fish pulled from the ocean by Maui). Despite never having been sick on a plane before, the sight makes Ellie physically ill:

> The reason I was nauseated and sweaty was the view out the window. The land below me shifted and trembled. One minute, we were floating over the snow-dusted mountain range that formed the spine of South Island. The next, I was seeing Maui's giant canoe beneath me instead...I stiffened as we reached the North island…I'd known that Te Ika a Maui drifted through his uneasy slumber, while the children of the maiden of the dawn walked blithely on his back…but I hadn't realized the scale. I couldn't see the whole of Maui's fish, any more than I could see the whole island. (237)

Ellie's first experience viewing the world from a Māori perspective makes her physically ill, echoing the discomfort that settlers often encounter when colonial narratives about land ownership and history are challenged. To her credit, she chooses to take the important step of facing the discomfort, admitting that "I could have avoided the whole sick-making ordeal by closing my eyes and turning away, but that struck me as somehow cowardly" (237). Ellie's willingness to face the distress caused by her new understanding of Māori land signals the beginning of her journey to become a settler ally.

Ellie later learns that her sight is affected by her belief in certain stories. When her classics teacher asks her what she sees in the moon, Ellie replies, "The sad woman, who can't get down," a reference to Rona, a Māori woman captured inside the moon and holding the branch of a ngaio tree. When her teacher reminds her of the story of Greek Selene that they studied in class, Ellie is surprised to see the image in the moon shift: "for a moment I saw it, the woman eagerly driving her silver chariot across the sky. The image wavered…and then the anguished woman returned, clutching the tree" (267). Ellie's teacher uses this as a lesson for Ellie, telling her that "Stories change us; they change the world…the stories we know are real things" (267).

Ellie learns that the stories she chooses to privilege shape her perception of truth and reality. Healey powerfully comments here on the generative and destructive potential of stories—when colonial stories hold sway, Indigenous stories are erased, and the world is transformed. Ellie's choice to continue recognizing Māori story throughout the novel allows her to work through the process of learning how position herself as a settler on Māori land.

Her good intentions aren't always enough, however, and Ellie occasionally struggles with knowing how to act. While discussing plans for an upcoming skirmish, Ellie injects herself into a conversation between her friend Mark and another Māori youth. After an awkward exchange in which the boy asks her to leave, Mark pulls her aside and says, "'you can't listen to us—that's secret knowledge. You're not entitled to it….Matiu is discussing the knowledge of his people. He gets to decide who hears it, not you'" (275-6). The revelation that she is not automatically entitled to Indigenous knowledge simply because she is a friend helps Ellie to understand her relationship to Māori as a supporting rather than leading role.

Ellie's final challenge is perhaps the most significant symbol of her journey to understand her settler identity. After speaking with Hine-nui-te-po, the Māori goddess of death, Ellie must find her way out of the underworld. Because her reality is shaped by the stories that she believes, the underworld that she experiences has a mix of Māori and Greek characteristics, and she ultimately finds herself facing the infamous Homeric gates of horn and ivory, but with a twist. Rather than a gate of horn and a gate of ivory, Ellie is faced with a wooden gate intricately carved with Māori motifs and a limestone gate replete with Corinthian columns. The gates confuse Ellie, who is counting on her knowledge of stories to help her navigate her way home: "There were two gates in one of the stories I knew: gates of horn and ivory, for dreams false and true. If I'd seen those gates, I would have known which path to take. But this was something

else, some other choice" (314). Ellie's frustrated exclamation, "how can I choose one or the other?" underscores her understanding that while she is not entitled to select the Māori door, choosing the Greek door does not accurately reflect her identity, either. The latter choice would also entail turning her back on Māori stories, effectively ending her allyship and perpetuating the erasure of Indigenous narrative in favor of Western histories. Ellie's dilemma reflects the frustration of settler youth born and raised in lands that they love and yet do not have ancestral claim to. Ellie finally works her way out of the dilemma when she realizes that "my stories weren't singular. I had been born in a land where many had brought stories, and I had chosen others on my own" (314). Her understanding that stories shape reality allows Ellie to make her own solution, which is to create her own passage between the two doors. Geoffrey Miles argues that this choice represents Healey's imaginative rendering of Ellie's bicultural background (217), but I would argue that it also represents the highly personal and individual journey that settlers must struggle through to understand their place in relation to Indigenous peoples and lands. It is through Ellie's messy individual struggle throughout the novel that she learns how to negotiate her own settler positionality and work towards becoming a settler ally.

Conclusion

The examples discussed in this chapter demonstrate that there is real power in retelling Indigenous stories, with tangible benefits for adolescent readers. As I show in chapter two, stereotypes plague Pasifika youth, and the examples in this chapter exemplify how YALO addresses issues of representation by "remythologizing" Indigenous stories and histories in order to help youth navigate contemporary issues through empowered, healthy representations of Pasifika adolescents and culture. By "linking ancestral hi/stories with our contemporary world," these writers not only engage youth interest in Indigenous stories, but "demonstrate their

relevance to our lives, provide literal models of behavior, and challenge readers to integrate and apply ancestral knowledge" (McDougall, *Finding Meaning* 5). The accessible format of YALO texts also expose settler youth to Indigenous histories and worldviews, inviting them to interrogate their own biases against Pasifika youth and Indigenous culture and land. Exposure to engaging forms of oral narratives provides both Indigenous and settler youth with new ways of seeing that create opportunities for empowerment and alliance in the present and into the future.

CHAPTER FOUR: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY

In recent years, calls to decolonize education in the Pacific by infusing curricula with Indigenous languages and pedagogies have filled conference proceedings, meetings, research reports, and academic publications (Thaman; Fairbairn-Dunlop; Teasdale et al.; Goodyear-Kaʻōpua; Reyes). As nations and peoples in Oceania continue to grapple with ongoing processes of colonialism and globalization, the effect of Western-based formal education on Pasifika youth consistently manifests through poor academic performance, high dropout rates, and subsequent socioeconomic disparities when compared with non-Indigenous populations (Mitrou et al.; Kanaʻiaupuni and Ledward; Warner). However, as moves to instruct students in vernacular languages and to teach Indigenous values through immersion and culturally-based programs continue to gain momentum, a broad set of challenges to implementation—including funding, access to land, ideological differences, and curriculum—affect any permanent or measurable application of Indigenous education. While it is important and necessary to continue working towards these large-scale initiatives, I argue that infusing existing curricula with YALO in the meantime can function as a decolonial intervention with positive effects for Pasifika and settler youth. I begin this chapter by outlining some of the educational challenges that Pasifika youth experience, followed by a discussion about the benefits and challenges to implementing Indigenous education in the region. I then argue for the efficacy of teaching YALO in secondary classrooms using a new ʻafakasi approach centered in Indigenous pedagogies that draws additionally on principles of critical and land-based pedagogies.

Education in Oceania

Educational outcomes for Pasifika Youth

Formal education in Oceania is largely structured according to Western models of curriculum and pedagogy that promulgate ongoing colonialist agendas. As Louis Althusser argues, schooling is the most dominant ideological apparatus used by the state to reproduce the relations of production (103), and Western systems of education have remained in place relatively unchanged since the colonial era. They are primarily characterized by "a heavy emphasis on English language and an academic Western curriculum with the aim of placing students in white collar civil service employment" (Burnett 21). Within these schools, Unaisi Nabobo-Baba emphasizes how "native children have been positioned, named, branded and equated with either being too lazy to learn, or just simply deficient learners" throughout Oceania (87). In Aotearoa New Zealand, Russell Bishop et al. point out that despite attempts at educational reform for Indigenous peoples, disparities continue because "current educational policies and practices were developed and continue to be developed within a framework of neo/colonialism, and as a result continue to serve the interests of a mono-cultural elite" ("Te Kotahitanga" 735). These interests are inherently focused on disempowering Indigenous peoples in order to continue settler colonial projects of dispossession and appropriation (Kēpa and Manu'atu), and much of the literature expresses a lack of relevant or empowering education as one of the main factors contributing to this dispossession (Mitrou et al.; Burnett; Bishop et al., "Te Kotahitanga").

Even within independent Pacific island nations, Western epistemologies continue to dominate educational agendas (Thaman; Burnett). Joe McCarter and Michael Gavin express "serious concerns…that formal education systems in some areas of the world do not adequately

account for local knowledge and cultural diversity. This results in school systems that are ineffective in attaining educational outcomes and which may actively erode cultural and linguistic diversity" (2). For example, Sina Vaai notes that cultural commitments to extended family groups in Samoa often result in "inconsistent attendance, parental pressure to stay home and help, and constant migratory movements from rural to urban and back" that formal schooling is ill-equipped to accommodate (68). As a result, youth drop out of school as teens before attaining a literacy rate high enough to qualify for many forms of employment or even complete basic functions such as opening a bank account (Vaai 68). Greg Burnett theorizes that these educational systems fail Indigenous peoples because they are unable to cope with the mobility of Oceanic peoples throughout the region: "The complexities and nuances of colonialism, contemporary Pacific social life and schooling—experiences marked less by rooted-ness, that is, essentialised Pacific cultural practices, beliefs and values and more by routed-ness, that is, cultural fluidity, heterogeneity and mobility—need to be considered" (24-5). Ultimately, education based in Western epistemologies and systems fails to acknowledge or account for Indigenous experience, language, and culture, which has resulted in a cycle of continuous dispossession that negatively affects almost every aspect of life for Pasifika peoples.

The shortcomings of Western-style formal schooling have manifested in stark socioeconomic realities for Pasifika peoples in settler-colonial contexts. Francis Mitrou et al. found that in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, Indigenous people on average had a gap of about 20% fewer completing a bachelor's degree or higher than non-Indigenous people (4). This disparity suggests that Indigenous students either aren't attending university or are poorly equipped to handle its rigors, resulting in high dropout rates. In Aotearoa New Zealand secondary schools, Māori students exhibit low academic achievement, high rates of suspension,

and overrepresentation in special education (Bishop et al., "Te Kotahitanga" 734). These educational outcomes correspond with unemployment rate and income disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous in Aotearoa New Zealand, which impacts "most aspects of Indigenous life, including health, education, participation in the economy, legal rights to traditional lands and resources, cultural security, and wider issues of social inclusion" (Mitrou et al. 6). Similar outcomes are evident in Hawai'i, where Sam No'eau Warner notes that "upward mobility through English language learning and use has proven to be a myth," evidenced by Kānaka Maoli overrepresented on the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic scale, including large populations of houseless families and individuals (71). Shawn Kana'iaupuni and Brandon Ledward note that

> In public schools, aggregate Hawaiian student achievement levels lag behind [other racial/ethnic] groups by up to 30 percentile points. Rates of chronic absenteeism, dropping out, and grade retention are significantly higher than average, suggesting low levels of student engagement. Native Hawaiian children in special education far outweigh their representative proportions in schools. Graduation rates are lower than other groups, and not surprisingly the percentage completing a college degree is about half the state average. (159)

Given these numbers, it is not surprising that "Hawaiians also have extremely poor health profiles, the worst, in fact, in Hawai'i…[and] are overrepresented in the prison system, while underrepresented as teachers, and as administrators" (Warner 71-2). Warner links these outcomes explicitly to failed educational policies, noting that "Hawaiian students also do very poorly in the regular English-medium classes in the public schools and that their scores are among the lowest on standardized academic tests in English in the state" (72). These statistics

point to a crisis in Pasifika populations that has in large part been perpetuated and intensified by failure in the educational systems of Oceania to account for Indigenous needs and worldview.

Indigenous Education: Definitions, Challenges, and Successes

In order to begin improving educational outcomes for Pasifika youth, scholars and educators have enacted a range of reforms that focus on Indigenizing education in Oceania. While the application of it necessarily varies from place to place due to the highly contextualized nature of Indigeneity, there are several overarching elements to consider in defining Indigenous education. Thaman argues that education throughout the region should shift its focus to privilege "Indigenous Oceanic perspectives, knowledge, and wisdom that have been devalued or suppressed because they were or are not considered important or worthwhile" (2). In order to begin working toward decolonizing education in the Pacific, Thaman enumerates several imperatives: first, educators must recognize the ways in which western epistemologies continue to dominate contemporary educational systems in Oceania; secondly, Pacific nations must learn to "[value] alternative ways of thinking about our world, particularly those rooted in the Indigenous cultures of Oceanic peoples"; and finally, education must transform into a model that is "culturally inclusive and gender sensitive" (3). Integrating Indigenous knowledge into the framework of modern schools, however, poses significant hurdles:

> The challenge, of course, is to transform Indigenous knowledge into school knowledge. The task is to teach knowledge systems, know-hows and life skills, according to Indigenous epistemologies, but in a way that would allow students to meet the requirements of formal schooling…Ultimately, the goal of such a project is to create better learning conditions for Pacific children. (Jourdan and Salaün 207)

These improved learning conditions, according to Bob Teasdale et al, should "prepare youth for life and work in Oceania, with an emphasis on the development of literacy. Work is defined not only in terms of paid employment but of self-sufficiency, self-reliance and/or self-employment" (35). According to this model, Indigenous education should work to reverse the socioeconomic disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples in Oceania while contributing to Indigenous resurgence.

Other scholars assert that the goals of Indigenous education should extend beyond socioeconomic success. Nabobo-Baba articulates Indigenous education as "promot[ing] the survival, sustainability and transformation of Pacific communities, environments, its peoples, cultures, languages and knowledges. These are done to ensure success and optimal performances of students that are aligned to multiple contexts in which Pacific peoples live in" (89). To achieve these kinds of positive outcomes for students and their communities, Tiffany Lee emphasizes that Indigenous education should create leaders who are conscious of the issues facing their people. Rather than simply liberate individuals financially, it must also develop students with a "critical Indigenous consciousness" who "embrace the role Indigenous leaders play in providing service to their community and people" (Lee 1). Consequently, education in Oceania must develop youth leadership oriented towards building Indigenous futures rather than simply teaching students to assimilate more successfully into Western ones.

By definition, then, Indigenous education is always already political. Nicole Reyes argues that "education, as a space for knowledge production and perpetuation, is also an important site in the struggle for Hawaiian sovereignty" (206). Goodyear-Ka'ōpua agrees, asserting that

> the continuing socioeconomic and educational inequalities Kānaka Maoli face within the settler school system and broader society can never be fully remedied without addressing

> the continued suppression of Hawaiian political sovereignty. In other words, education that celebrates Indigenous cultures *without* challenging dominant political and economic relations will not create futures in which the conditions of dispossession are alleviated. (6)

In other words, Indigenous education should actively work to support Indigenous political movements. While linguistic and cultural revitalization are necessary elements of sovereignty projects, Indigenous education must also make students aware of the structures of colonial power that perpetuate ongoing cycles of Indigenous dispossession. This means explicit engagement with larger Indigenous projects seeking land reclamation and self-determination. Ultimately, a truly decolonial Indigenous education must do more than teach students how to be financially successful or culturally competent; it also requires the development of leaders that are conscious of the political issues faced by Indigenous peoples and equipped with the tools to actively support decolonization efforts. That being said, there remain significant hurdles to achieving these goals in Oceania. Implementing Indigenous educational models presents a variety of challenges. Lee notes that attempts to support Indigenous students within public schools are often ineffective because

> cultural ignorance and insensitivity, ineffective curricular strategies, and inadequate funding continue to permeate many of these schools. Likely the largest problem is the lack of Native control and voice in these schools' educational approaches, as they must abide by state-mandated curriculum and licensing restrictions. (5)

In independent Pacific nations, temporary educational "projects" and "initiatives" are frequently funded by outside donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that exercise a great deal of control over curriculum and pedagogy, working under the logic of an "aid policy that suggests

that if it has worked for developed donor countries, then it must work for the developing world also" (Burnett 23).[42] The inconsistency and inefficacy of such projects underscores the need for island nations to make long-term commitments to contextualized educational practices that that are directed locally to build a consistent foundation rooted in Indigenous epistemologies. Despite these challenges, several regional and nation-specific educational initiatives throughout Oceania have made strides towards improving educational and cultural outcomes for many Pasifika youth. Because these programs represent models for Indigenous education that might be expanded to other schools in the region, it is worth briefly exploring a few of the larger initiatives to uncover how they are working to respond to different educational needs throughout the region.

The PRIDE project (Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education), was developed and implemented by the University of the South Pacific (USP) between 2003-2010. Essentially, "the ideology of education proposed by PRIDE is that children should be educated in their mother tongue, and the curriculum should incorporate local cultural references while at the same time, allowing children to succeed in a global world" (Jourdan and Salaün 207). In order to accomplish this, PRIDE worked with nations to develop vernacular curricula bilingually with English (where possible), blending oral and written forms of communication into the curriculum. It further emphasized indigenous values of community and reciprocity through group work and group assignments. With help from PRIDE researchers, "each country is…encouraged to build its education plans on a stronger foundation of local cultures, languages and epistemologies, thus enabling students to develop deep pride in their own values, traditions and wisdoms, and a clear sense of their own local cultural identity" (Teasdale et al. 37). Some of the positive outcomes of the PRIDE project include greater collaboration between nations in terms of funding, resources,

and teaching strategies (Puamau 12). While the long-term effects of the PRIDE program have yet to be measured, its work to develop culturally relevant and empowering curricula in independent countries with limited educational resources is a critical step in realizing educational independence and autonomy for indigenous peoples in Oceania.

A second program initiated by USP and closely related to the PRIDE Project, RPEIPP (Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for Pacific Peoples by Pacific Peoples) is a program dedicated to filling the need for culturally conscious indigenous teachers throughout Oceania. The program focuses on both teacher training and youth leadership that integrates indigenous epistemologies; as such, it is "internally driven" by indigenous educators. According to Nabobo-Baba, the stated purpose of RPEIPP is "the sustained development of capabilities of Pacific graduates and educators, by Pacific educators themselves (83). RPEIPP takes several approaches to achieve this purpose. First, teacher training through modules and courses offered both at USP and in workshops throughout the region are "aimed at raising teacher trainee's awareness of the link between culture teaching and learning and the issue of cultural gaps, and the role of teachers in bridging these" (Nabobo-Baba 86). For USP students in particular, the goal is to "produce graduates who had attributes that could serve in both worlds – their Pacific island communities and the modern world" (Nabobo-Baba 86). REIPP additionally hosts conferences, workshops, and symposia focused on training teachers and leaders able to implement curricula developed through the PRIDE program. Finally, REIPP has published and disseminated substantial research, training materials, and indigenous educational approaches for educators. REIPP's focus on teacher training that complements PRIDE curricula provides an excellent model for addressing the needs of both students and teachers in indigenous education.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Kotahitanga is a program which works to improve Māori educational outcomes in both primary and secondary schools. It consists of an extensive teacher training program that asks educators to examine "their own cultural assumptions and consideration of how they themselves might be participants in the systematic marginalization of students in their classrooms, schools, and the wider system" (Bishop et al., "Professional" 696). The program ultimately trains teachers "to implement a culturally responsive, relationship-based pedagogy" based in Māori community and family values (Bishop et al., "Professional" 695-7). Preliminary analyses of the Te Kotahitanga professional development cycle "indicates that participation, engagement, retention, and achievement all show strong positive gains in relation to a comparison groups of schools" (Bishop et al., "Professional" 697). Implementation of the Te Kotahitanga program across schools and grade levels has also consistently improved Māori student achievement, suggesting that it could be an effective methodology throughout Aotearoa New Zealand and, with contextualization, throughout Oceania.

PREL (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning) is a non-profit consulting group that provides educational resources in Hawai‘i, American Samoa and throughout Micronesia (Northern Marianas Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Palau, and the Marshall Islands). The organization "collaborates with schools, agencies, and communities to transform schooling and promote dynamic reciprocal learning communities built on strong social and cultural capital" with specific initiatives focused on early literacy, helping youth develop marketable job skills, environmental awareness, health literacy, and multilingual proficiency ("Our Mission"). One program of particular relevance to this project is PREL's Pacific Storytellers Cooperative, which is a digital archive of place-based Pasifika stories that "seeks to find the nexus between oral traditions of island communities and present-day modalities of

communication, especially among Pacific youth" ("What is the Co-Op?"). The project's archive is filled with stories told by Pasifika youth from Palau, Saipan, American Samoa and other island groups, and notably includes writing and multimedia productions by well-known Marshallese poet Jetnil-Kijiner.

A final initiative worth noting is the proliferation of Hawaiian-focused charter schools within the past decade. In these schools, educators employ "sovereign pedagogies" in order to "recognize that sovereignty at both the personal and the collective levels is critical for the health and the optimal learning of Indigenous People" and to emphasize "the continuing socioeconomic and educational inequalities Kanaka Maoli face within the settler school system" (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua 6). A large part of the curricula employs ʻāina-based or land-centered literacies, "based on an intimate connection with and knowledge of the land" (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua 37), as a vehicle for politicizing these inequalities, including material dispossession of land within a settler colonial context. The specific educational outcomes of these schools is encouraging. Researchers have noted gains in overcoming educational disparities in Hawaiian charter school students vs. non-Hawaiian students generally (Takayama). In a 2010 study, Amelia Borofsky found that "graduates emphasized spiritual, present, and future connections through self, family, and community contributions" (180). Borofsky's study importantly measures educational outcomes using cultural measurements of success rather than Western academic ones; little to no emphasis was placed on test scores or grades, while a great deal of emphasis was placed on community involvement, leadership, and perpetuation of knowledge through example.

Ultimately, Indigenous education should empower Pasifika youth to negotiate the various arenas that they will encounter in a fast-changing and dynamic region. Teasdale et al explain that

> young people need to grow up with the skills and confidence to live successfully in a globalising world. They need to survive economically in a global marketplace and take their place in the modern, global workforce. Yet it is becoming increasingly recognised in Oceania that they also need to grow up with a clear sense of their own local cultural identity, built on a strong foundation of their own cultures, languages and spiritualities, and with a deep pride in their own values, traditions and wisdoms. (41)

Of course, for other scholars, preparing students for success in a globalized world is not as important as preparing them to create a new reality that they negotiate for themselves through political action and the resurgence of Indigenous practices and values. Borofsky's research articulates the potential of Indigenous education to develop a new generation of leaders who are both culturally and spiritually confident (182), which "sets the foundation for Pacific youth to connect to other cultural, social and educational spaces and to create new knowledge" (Fairbairn-Dunlop 875). Rooted in cultural values, these youths have the ability to redefine what it means to be successful from an Indigenous perspective. Arguably, what these scholars are calling for is essentially a new 'afakasi approach to education that values local Indigenous knowledges while also being sensitive to the importance of teaching youth to effectively negotiate global issues and concerns. While fully exploring the possibilities of a new 'afakasi approach to education is beyond the scope of this project, I assert that one element of this approach entails teaching YALO texts in secondary schools because their 'afakasi nature functions as a model for negotiating the necessarily mixed elements of a new 'afakasi education.

Teaching with YALO

Considering the current educational outcomes for Pasifika youth in Oceania, there is a clear need for decolonizing efforts to expand beyond the small number of Indigenous educational

initiatives working to reverse these outcomes. While the ideal, of course, would be to restructure all schools based on Indigenous educational models, expecting this to happen immediately (or even anytime soon, in some places) is impractical, and continues to leave many, many students exposed to damaging or absent narratives about Pasifika peoples and cultures. I propose that infusing YALO into the curriculum is a viable option for helping students develop a new ‘afakasi consciousness from within the educational state apparatus. I submit that in doing so, it can be used as a trigger for what James Martel names misinterpellation, which “decentralizes and opposes those highly regulated and singular selves that interpellation tells us that we are and have always been” (6). Because it allows for the multiple subjectivity of the new ‘afakasi, a misinterpellated subject has the power to act “‘within’ the system that they contest” (Martel 5) and “the potential to disobey and obey simultaneously” (Martel 21). As an ‘afakasi genre, YALO participates in Western ideals of the primacy of written literacy while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of Indigenous literacies including oral narratives, reading land, the creation of visual and material objects, and participating in a communal society. As such, it is able to function effectively within the structures of formal education systems even as it subverts the ideology of those systems by validating Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. I believe that it can be equally effective in culturally-based schools as a tool to help train students in the ‘afakasi skills that they need to develop in order to take part in “the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism” envisioned by Wendt as part of the New Oceania (76).

While written Pacific literatures can also achieve these outcomes (and do so effectively within tertiary institutions), they are less likely to be successful in secondary schools than YALO. One reason why YALO is a good choice for secondary schools is because, in spite of attitudes towards the genre that dismiss its literary merit, YAL is the most developmentally

appropriate literature for adolescent readers. Emerging scholarship suggests that because adolescents' cognitive ability to balance ethics and emotion has not yet fully developed, reading YAL rather than adult texts "offers a valuable training ground for young people to test and develop their emotional literacy in a safe mode" (Nikolajeva 82). As a result, it is uniquely suited for use in secondary classrooms. Marci Glaus explains that YAL novels are more

> relevant to teenagers and different from many canonical texts not written specifically for adolescents...many teenagers are not ready for classical literature because many such books do not deal with teenage concerns, and they were written primarily for educated adults. Because so many works of young adult literature contain the same literary elements of more traditional canonical texts, bridging young adult literature with some canonical works continues to be an appropriate method for building levels of text complexity. (408)

Often, curricula that force students to read complex canonical texts can discourage students from engaging with learning because the language is too difficult and the themes do not engage their interest. Glaus asserts that "[a secondary] English curriculum centered primarily on canonical texts holds little promise, particularly for those who find reading challenging" (407). Instead, she argues that the use of YAL is the best way to "establish reading that both engages students and provides them with opportunities to grapple with diverse, sophisticated texts" (407). Discussions about these texts help younger readers to struggle with their own "emerging identity, their need to explore alternative roles, the complexity and variability of their developing cognitive ability, and their shifting reader roles" (Crumpler & Wedwick 65). The engagement found through high-interest, textually complex YA literature can serve this purpose.

Studies show that intensive exposure to YAL has a transformative effect on the social and emotional development of adolescent readers. In a study that measured the effects of student engagement with YAL, Gay Ivey and Peter Johnston found that middle school students who spent a year self-selecting and reading a variety of YAL and discussing it together reported improvements in their relationship building, sense of self and identity, understanding of social situations, and empowerment in various arenas of agency (including moral, social, life narrative, and self-control); additionally, students noted increased happiness, awareness, and open-mindedness (262-4). These outcomes were aggregated from the results of 71 end-of-year student interviews in addition to observational data during two weeks of classroom visits, and analysis of video and audio recordings of students discussing YAL in small groups. Ultimately, the study suggests that reading YAL can play a crucial role in identity formation:

> through their engagement with these books and one another, these young adults were recognizing the possibility of, and the cultural tools for, shaping their individual and collective lives. As part of their engaged reading, these adolescents experienced transformed interactions with their social environment, yet they, in turn, transformed that environment and, thus, themselves. By showing, to varying degrees, an awareness of these processes, they appeared to be gaining a sense of agency with respect to their own development—their personhood. (Ivey and Johnston 271)

Understanding some of the effects of YAL on its target audience demonstrates the usefulness of its age-based classification for purposes of identifying and disseminating texts to specific readers for specific uses.

For similar reasons, YALO texts are uniquely suited to engaging Oceanic youth in educational settings. In addition to being more developmentally appropriate and engaging than

much of the more established works of Pacific literature, YALO novels address attitudes towards Pasifika youth by creating positive representations of smart, responsible, and talented Indigenous adolescents, which I demonstrate in chapter two. These representations play an important role in empowering Pasifika youth and challenging stereotypes. As I show in chapter three, YALO is also an important site of creative adaptation, portraying Indigenous story and storytelling forms in ways that convey cultural values and ask youth to interact with their own histories. As a result, the adaptations re-story colonized places with Indigenous histories. These are important decolonial functions that can be inserted within the framework of existing Western-based school structures. As such, teaching YALO texts is a practical intervention in Pacific education because it can be implemented immediately as a decolonial tool in places where colonial structures are firmly in place. It is likewise a relatively cheap way to bring decolonial material into the classroom, and as I discuss further at the end of the chapter, its accessibility for all readers can potentially benefit non-Indigenous teachers who might be unsure of their ability to contextualize Indigenous issues.

Of course, there are still plenty of challenges to getting YALO into Pacific classrooms. The first is that teachers may not be aware of many YALO titles because the number of overall novels is small, and many do not have widespread marketing due to limited print runs or self-published status. In New Zealand and its affiliates, access to and use of YALO texts in classroom settings is limited primarily by an individual teacher's choice, as the country has adopted a decentralized approach to curriculum and instructional materials that allows individual schools and teachers to adapt their educational objectives to meet the needs of their local student population. This is a recent development, as New Zealand removed its National Standards curriculum at the end of 2017 in order to decentralize ("National Standards"). New guidelines on

the national curriculum website ask educators "to validate and value students' cultural identities and norms, our classrooms need to become culturally responsive environments – environments that honour our bicultural heritage and recognise the diversity of our communities and society – regardless of the make-up of our classes" ("Focusing"). While this localized and culturally sensitive approach to curriculum and text choice is promising, lack of awareness of YALO texts and/or teacher reluctance to engage with Indigenous texts may continue to keep these books out of the classroom.

On the other hand, U.S. territories and protectorates such as Guam and the Northern Marianas Islands operate under national Common Core standards, which standardize instructional materials. For example, in Hawai'i, the state's Common Core curriculum for English Language Arts (ELA) is outsourced to the CollegeBoard's SpringBoard program, which focuses primarily on canonized American, European, and a handful of international works in English specifically designed to help students perform well on the CollegeBoard's standardized college entrance exams ("ELA"). While Hawai'i's Department of Education is mandated to allow schools to request instructional materials that are not on the list of texts required by SpringBoard ("Hawaii Common Core" 4), the process of acquiring these texts requires a three-step bureaucratic process that entails submitting a detailed proposal that provides evidence of how the text aligns with common core outcomes, including an implementation and assessment plan; a committee technical review that takes place only once per year; and a final administrative review by the Complex Area Superintendent ("Hawaii Common Core" 5-6). While technically it is possible for committed teachers to gain approval and funding for the use of these texts, the lengthy and onerous process of requesting alternative materials and the state's focus on Common

Core standards pose significant obstacles to acquiring YALO texts for use in Hawai‘i’s public schools.

In independent Oceanic countries, the primary limiting factor for the use of YALO texts is funding and access. For example, in Papua New Guinea, teachers have the freedom to choose texts “that are readily available at the schools or in the community” (“Teacher Guide” 83), but are not given funding to buy new books, most of which would need to be shipped in at additional cost from publishers in Hawai‘i, Aotearoa New Zealand, Fiji, or other larger countries. Limited funding and access is likewise the case in Samoa, Tonga, and other small island nations. Similarly, despite the affordable pricing of many self-published YALO texts online,[43] these schools also lack the technology necessary to view the texts as e-books. Currently, the most effective way to provide YALO texts to these classrooms is through donations, but this is ultimately uneven and ineffective as a long-term practice. To compound these issues, many YALO texts are self-published or only had limited print runs at small presses, and so getting access to them after the initial publication period can sometimes be difficult. Despite these significant ongoing challenges to getting YALO into secondary classrooms in Oceania, I maintain that educators should try their best to creatively acquire these texts for their students, and critics should begin to review them more prominently in order to increase their visibility.

‘Afakasi pedagogical approaches

Because of YALO’s ‘afakasi blending of Western and Indigenous elements and easily accessible content, it may initially seem easy to teach. However, just because a work is accessible does not mean that it is not complex. In fact, the accessibility of the language allows for more in-depth engagement with the content, because students are not spending most of their cognitive energy simply trying to understand the basic plot and themes. As a result, teachers

need to be equipped with pedagogical tools for responsibly facilitating discussions about difficult local and regional issues relating to ‘afakasi identity, settler colonialism, and decolonization. When it comes to teaching YALO, the ‘afakasi nature of the texts naturally requires an ‘afakasi pedagogy—formed, of course, using a mix of several approaches—in order to encourage Pasifika and settler ally students to develop a new ‘afakasi consciousness. The centrality of decolonization to this project places Indigenous pedagogies at the center of this framework, informed by land-centered and critical pedagogical practices.

Indigenous pedagogies enact cultural values in teaching and learning practices aimed towards decolonization efforts. Because Indigenous cultures and the colonial contexts within which they operate are highly specific to location, there is no universal articulation of Indigenous pedagogy. Accordingly, “each expression of Indigenous education…is unique and shaped by the land and community from which it grows” (Goodyear-Ka’ōpua 11). While this means that the development of any Indigenous educational framework can only be achieved through a great deal of hard work, it is also true that such frameworks are much better suited to meet the needs of local youth than universalized education.

That being said, there are several overarching principles of many Indigenous pedagogies that can help us to arrive at a functional definition of the term. One common element of Indigenous pedagogies is reciprocity, which develops relationships of caring between students and teachers. Closely related is the practice of community involvement, which honors the communal nature of Indigenous learning and teaching and recognizes that individual success is less important than group self-determination. Another integral aspect of most Indigenous pedagogy is experiential learning, or learning through action. Kapā Oliveira explains that Hawaiians learn through doing, or embodying knowledge, rather than solely through cerebral

efforts: “Kanaka knowledge is largely performative in nature, and our bodies are conduits of knowledge. We acquire knowledge by observing masters and by engaging in practices firsthand” (112). The well-known Hawaiian ‘olelo no‘eau (wise saying) “Ma ka hana ka ‘ike,” or “in working one learns,” echoes this concept (Pukui). In other words, effective learning is about doing rather than telling, application rather than abstraction.

Indigenous pedagogy also places a heavy emphasis on the importance of land as an avenue for teaching and learning. Place is fundamental to Indigenous peoples, who draw ancestry, history, and culture from their lands:

> The natural features within the homelands of each Indigenous cultural group are therefore the symbols that contain important information. Indigenous people have drawn on this information to explain their origins, to make sense of their world and to practice and maintain their cultures. Reading the land is therefore only possible within the context of stories, lores, and ways of relating to each other and their homelands. (Williams-Kennedy, qtd. in ho‘omanawanui 205)

It follows, then, that land plays an integral role in Indigenous education. ho‘omanawanui explicitly frames literacy in terms of land using the framework of ‘Ike ‘Āina, which translates as “knowledge (‘ike) about land (‘āina),” as well as “learning from the land” (ho‘omanawanui 204). Hawaiian educator and scholar Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua similarly conceptualizes what she terms “land-centered literacies,” which are

> a range of critically engaged observational, interpretive, and expressive practices that put land and natural environment at the center. Land-centered literacies can include narrower definitions of literacy that refer specifically to working with printed text, but they can also include reading the patterns of winds or the balance of water in a stream. Moreover,

> the Hawaiian land-centered literacies I discuss…include study of and engagement with historical and contemporary relations of power. (xvi)

These descriptions underscore the importance of land for the maintenance of Indigenous identity and culture, clearly marking the centrality of place in Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. As the last sentence of Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua’s quote suggests, however, land is also political.

Place is also of primary concern to Indigenous peoples because of an ongoing colonial process of land dispossession that has relegated them to the margins of societies, visible only on shrinking reservations (Goeman), in contested borderlands (Anzaldúa), or in tents on Hawai‘i beaches (McDougall, “Uē to Kū‘ē” 53). Because of this history, Native writers refuse “to disassociate culture, identity, and power from the land” (Lyons 457), and Native scholars continuously produce work that aims to increase the visibility of Indigenous land dispossession within the academy (Lyons, Calderon, Goeman). Clearly, place-based concerns are inherent in Indigenous education; however, it is important to note the difference between land- or ‘aina-based education and place-based education. Calderon makes an important distinction:

> One of the major limitations of critical place-based education as it is generally theorized is that it does not go far enough to connect how place in the US has been inexorably linked to the genocide of Indigenous peoples and continued settler colonialism. While settler colonial violence and oppression is not an explicit aspect of place-based education, it nonetheless fails to meaningfully engage colonial legacies in education and particularly how conceptions of place have been involved in their continuance. (25)

In other words, while place-based education is ostensibly focused on land, it ignores Indigenous presence and understanding of land, enacting settler colonial erasure. Conversely, land-based

education centers Indigenous relationships to place while calling attention to the need for material decolonization and the return of stolen lands.

It is in the political work of land-based education that critical pedagogy[44] is well-positioned to support Indigenous educational goals. In his foundational work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire theorizes the power of oppression, arguing that the oppressed can only be liberated through an education that results in *conscientização,* or critical consciousness. Freire's work has been extremely influential, especially within the field of education, where it has been adapted into various contexts and for a variety of purposes that engage issues of class, gender, race, sexuality, and others. Here, I focus on how Freire's pedagogy provides a powerful foundation for furthering Indigenous educational goals that center the importance of land. Freire names his critical pedagogy the pedagogy of the oppressed, which he defines as

> a pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade. (48)

In achieving critical consciousness through a pedagogy of the oppressed, Freire outlines several key principles. As his definition makes clear, critical pedagogy is a pedagogy of action that is both transformative and revolutionary. Key to this education is the principle of praxis, or "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (51). Freire explains that achieving praxis is a process of critically "confront[ing] reality" and then "acting upon that reality" (52). Any pedagogy that incorporates Freire should exhibit a goal for praxis that is aimed

at changing lived reality through action. This concept of praxis aligns well with Oceanic conceptions of learning through doing.

Another key concept in critical pedagogy is the adoption of a problem-posing concept of education that replaces what Freire calls the banking concept of education. In the banking concept of education, the teacher "narrates" or dictates information to students, "depositing" knowledge but never actually teaching them to think for themselves (Freire 71-3). In contrast, the problem-posing concept of education consists of the teacher and students learning together through dialogue that critically interrogates the problems in students' lived realities, "[becoming] jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (79-80). Freire argues that problem-posing education is essential for producing empowered and conscious people motivated to change and transform the world, because through it "people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (83). The ability see reality as a process rather than an object means that it can be shaped through praxis, which is an important goal of a new 'afakasi approach to education.

Freire also emphasizes the importance of honoring and valuing the knowledges of the oppressed and working with the community to identify themes for study in the classroom. In order to determine these themes—concrete representations of ideas/concepts/hopes/doubts/values within a given context, including the community's attitudes towards them (101)—Freire stresses the importance of meeting with the community and establishing a relationship of trust and mutual understanding (110). This is a crucial point for Freire, because "the investigation of thematics involves the investigation of the people's thinking—thinking which occurs only in and among people together seeking out reality. I cannot

think *for others* or *without others*, nor can others think *for me*" (108). The collaborative nature of seeking the themes for a given group's journey toward praxis—and ultimately, critical consciousness—values the knowledges held by students and the communities from which they come.

Finally, Freire establishes that the only way to enact critical pedagogy is through communication, specifically dialogue. He defines dialogue as "the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (88). It is "an existential necessity" that requires love (89), humility (90), faith (90-91), hope (91-2), and critical thinking (92). In other words, it can't exist within a system of domination. Freire names several elements required/resulting from a "theory of dialogical cultural action" (167), including cooperation (167), unity (172), organization (175) and cultural synthesis (179). Together, these principles constitute a pedagogy that allows teachers and students to develop mutual respect and love in order to achieve a critical consciousness that moves them to purposeful, cooperative action that transforms their lived realities.

While the framework outlined by Freire can be useful in supporting Indigenous educational aims, there are several points of tension between Indigenous and critical pedagogy that should be acknowledged. Reyes points out that while "critical pedagogy emphasizes…the liberation of individual selves, Indigenous peoples are more likely to envision a form of social justice that is predicated upon the existence of Indigenous sovereignty, which involves the liberation of entire communities and nations" (211). In other words, Freire's pedagogy does not account for the communal nature of Indigenous communities and ongoing struggles for self-determination. This is an issue addressed by Tuck and Yang, who take Freire to task for his lack of context in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, arguing that it hurts Indigenous education:

> Under Freire's paradigm, it is unclear who the oppressed are, even more ambiguous who the oppressors are….there are no Natives, no Settlers, and indeed no history, and the future is simply a rupture from the timeless present. Settler colonialism is absent from his discussion, implying either that it is an unimportant analytic or that it is an already completed project of the past (a past oppression perhaps). (20)

According to this perspective, Freire's lack of specificity allows settler scholars to define oppression as colonization and freedom as decolonization metaphorically, sidestepping material definitions of both words as the literal taking/return of land.

While this is certainly true, Freire's lack of specificity is what makes his pedagogy so influential and adaptable to a variety of contexts. In fact, a number of Indigenous educators have successfully and powerfully adapted critical pedagogy in decolonizing educational projects to great effect, since it provides "a useful lens through which Indigenous peoples may consider education as a site for power negotiation and potential liberation" (Reyes 209). For example, Ku Kahakalau cites critical pedagogy and problem-based learning as paradigms that can and should be implemented in an effective Hawaiian educational framework (92). Goodyear-Kaʻōpua likewise makes explicit use of critical pedagogy as a decolonizing tool, stating that her goal is "to teach literacy as a liberatory praxis rather than as just an economic expedient" (xi). Both Kahakalau and Goodyear-Kaʻōpua apply critical pedagogies in their charter schools in order to address the "continuing need for Kānaka Maoli and other autochthonous people— so long construed as marginal figures, victims, or anachronistic natives frozen within history— to be educated as builders and shapers of pasts, presents, and futures" (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua 5). Critical pedagogy in this sense helps students to understand their "kuleana in the context of a larger, intergenerational movement for self-determination and aloha ʻāina," providing them with "a

foundation from which to resist powerful forces of elimination, alienation, and belittlement" (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua 5). Even when they aren't explicitly aligned, critical and Indigenous pedagogies are inherently resonant; Indigenous education's focus on place is highly contextual through its emphasis on particular places (hoʻomanawanui 205, 234-5), values the "multiple literacies" that students bring to the classroom from home (hoʻomanawanui 212, 214), and centers collaboration and experience (hoʻomanawanui 234-5). hoʻomanawanui explains that Indigenous education holds transformational potential:

> Indigenous literacy helps perpetuate culture, important when cultural practice is under constant assault and commodification. It promotes culturally rooted identity and more positive self-esteem among students, their families, and the communities to which they belong, resulting in increased well-being. It can also nurture or solidify links between student, family, and ʻāina, often leading to renewed interest in cultural practice or more political involvement with issues such as land preservation. (236)

These Hawaiian scholars and educators make clear that critical pedagogy is compatible with land-based and Indigenous educational practices and goals and can be deliberately brought to bear in order to forward ongoing projects for land recovery and political self-determination.

Unfortunately, a decentralized approach to education that allows each program or school to develop its own curriculum is not possible in many places, including much of Hawaʻi's public school system. In the meantime, teachers enacting the new ʻafakasi pedagogy can raise discussions around land-based issues generated by YALO readings within the framework of standardized test-centered teaching mandates. This creates inclusion for all teachers and learners by localizing education based on student needs in the community and available land-based

resources that are relevant to Indigenous and settler students. In this sense, decolonization is for everyone. Angela Haas explains that

> Ultimately, a decolonial pedagogy interrogates how colonialism has impacted the experiential and formal education of *all* learners and teachers of *all* cultural backgrounds, as colonization has always already shaped our rhetorics and thus has a long history of prescribing personal and community identities and the values associated with those identities: our different ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, classes, generations, nationalities, abilities, and more. (Haas 191)

One of the most critical needs in Indigenous education in Oceania today is a greater number of teachers (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) trained in the cultural context, learning styles, and vernacular languages of their Indigenous students. Unfortunately, without a decolonizing agenda that improves outcomes for Pasifika students, it is unlikely that we will see significant numbers of Indigenous teachers enter the workforce. It is critical that we find the resources needed to ensure that this training is made accessible and implemented in existing education programs throughout the region. In the meantime, settler teachers wanting to participate in decolonial pedagogies like the new ‘afakasi can responsibly do the work necessary to engage with YALO texts alongside students.

Including settler teachers and learners

Current examples of Indigenous education in Oceana demonstrate its value for Indigenous peoples; what is needed now is widespread support for expanding these initiatives in ways that make them available for all students, rather than a select few. As Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua asserts, Indigenous education is important for all people because Indigeneity teaches how to develop healthy relationships with people and place that are not linked to imperialism or

capitalism (31). She further argues that "one of the goals of critical Indigenous education and broader Indigenous resurgence projects is to engage diverse people in unmaking the social relations that characterize settler colonialisms. As I have discussed…both Indigenous and settler educators participate in this process together" (Goodyear-Kaopua 149). Without the support of settlers, it is hard to say whether initiatives to expand Indigenous education throughout the region will gain significant traction. This is not to say that they won't, but to attend to my continued assertion that decolonial change will occur much faster through collaboration.

That being said, some might warn here about the danger of appropriation and misuse/misapplication of Indigeneity in such a decolonizing project, especially in a field that has historically excluded it. Lisa King notes that

> Though many well-meaning instructors are interested in teaching American Indian or Indigenous texts…without knowing some of the key concepts that shape Indigenous discourses, these instructors' efforts run the risk of misrepresenting Indigenous texts or even marking them as simply one more 'minority' discourse in a multicultural sampling. (18)

Clearly, when teaching Indigenous texts without a knowledge of Indigenous issues, settler teachers can often do more harm than good. Julie Kaomea further notes that settler teachers and students can unwittingly disrupt Indigenous educational spaces by assuming Western learning styles, including interrupting lessons with questions rather than listening and observing and waiting to ask questions later (84-86). After all, Indigenous pedagogies do not originate in the academy, despite some similarities and overlap with place-based pedagogies, such as the importance of environmental stewardship, experiential learning, and community cooperation and involvement. However, while there is value in maintaining Indigenous conceptions of land and

the role of place in education as distinct from theories derived from within the academy, limiting Indigenous pedagogies for application only for and by Indigenous peoples perpetuates ongoing issues of misrepresentation and limited decolonization that characterizes the status quo.

L. King argues that in order to avoid the misrepresentation of Indigenous texts, all instructors should foreground their study with students around three concepts: sovereignty, rhetorical sovereignty, and representation.[45] Because these keywords conceptualize the relationships that students have with each other and with the places in which they live, using them in the classroom "continues the stories of indigenous survivance and the dialogue between communities in a more productive way" (L. King 32). L. King's keywords place Indigenous claims for literal decolonization at the center of class discussions, asking both students and teachers to confront the historical and ongoing realities that have stripped Indigenous peoples of self-determination and contribute to continuing cycles of dispossession. Without an understanding of these three concepts, students and teachers alike are likely to misread Indigenous texts entirely, perpetuating issues of misrepresentation and marginalization.

Of course, teaching Indigenous texts within a framework that uncovers settler anxieties and the tensions between Indigenous and settler agendas can be an uncomfortable experience for everyone involved. Kaomea calls for settler teachers to collaborate with Indigenous educators and to use their privilege to amplify Indigenous voices (80); she further emphasizes that settler learners should "make a special effort to fit into the community's style of learning and interacting rather than changing it with their presence" (Kaomea 90). As Rose Gubele makes clear, "being an ally is hard work. Allies must educate themselves. But as teachers, we already do this…Non-Native teachers, especially, must realize that, in some ways, they have an advantage over Native teachers when they are teaching non-Native students. Their students are

like them" (King, Gubele, & Anderson 215). Despite the challenges inherent in implementing Indigenous pedagogies for settler teachers and learners, it is possible to create decolonial learning environments for adolescent students. In the section that follows, I outline some new ʻafakasi pedagogical strategies and assignments for teaching YALO texts that can help to empower both Indigenous and settler teachers to tackle the often uncomfortable task of decolonizing their classrooms.

Assignments and Praxis

As an ʻafakasi Pacific islander of Samoan and European descent living as a Pasifika settler in Hawaiʻi, I feel a responsibility to write Pasifika youth literacies into greater visibility in the academy, challenging place-based scholars who participate in settler erasure of Indigenous claims and literary scholars who dismiss YAL as less worthy of study than "literary" texts. In this sense, I believe in the metaphorical power of "decolonizing the mind" as an important first step towards literal decolonization (Ngũgĩ wa Thiongʻo; Calderon). At the same time, like Kahakalau and Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, I also see critical pedagogy as an appropriate and effective way to foster transformational change within my classroom, where I consciously attempt to incorporate pedagogical practices that are aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing. The following subsections provide a small sampling of new ʻafakasi pedagogical practices and assignments that I use in my own teaching that can be effectively applied to the teaching of YALO texts.

Teach Indigenous texts

It might seem self-evident, but the first principle of a new ʻafakasi pedagogy is to commit to teaching Indigenous texts. While there are wonderful settler texts that forward decolonial agendas, it is crucial to privilege Indigenous voices in spaces where they are historically absent

in order to establish a space for those perspectives. One aspect of my own teaching praxis is to include Indigenous texts—preferably representing local Indigenous group(s)—in every course that I teach, especially those in which they might seem out of place. Because all land is Indigenous land, including these texts ensures that we will be able to problematize historical narratives and interrogate student assumptions about their relationships to place and each other. That being said, one of the biggest barriers to teaching and learning about Indigenous texts is fear rather than disinterest. As Gubele makes clear,

> Non-Native students who take classes that feature Native content desperately want to learn, but they are afraid of saying the wrong thing. I have heard similar sentiments from non-Native teachers. I encourage teachers to talk to their students about their fear. It is also important to acknowledge the process. All of us hold on to stereotypical thinking. All of us have prejudices. All of us struggle to understand those who are different from us. All of us make mistakes. (King, Gubele, & Anderson 215)

Gubele's statement is an invitation for open communication through dialogue, where teachers are positioned as learners alongside students. While I am myself Pasifika, I am not exempt from the sentiments expressed here—even teaching Samoan texts can often be challenging, because as a diasporic 'afakasi I did not grow up in a traditional Samoan household, nor am I fluent in the language. I likewise regularly teach texts that represent other Oceanic culture groups besides my own, which requires me to decentralize my authority and learn with and from my students.

One of the best ways to do this is to honor the home knowledges of the students themselves, many of whom in Oceania will be Indigenous and have often been told that their ancestral knowledge has no place in the classroom. Unfortunately, "differences in home and school perspectives can be confusing and damaging for Indigenous children in school

environments that refuse to validate the Indigenous-based multiple literacies learned in the home environment" (hoʻomanawanui "'Ike 'Āina" 212). In my own classes, I allow my Pasifika students to take the lead when we discuss YALO and other Pacific texts, and for many it is the first time that they have been positioned as "experts" within an academic space. An important caveat to this method, however, is to avoid positioning Indigenous students as "informants" rather than experts. For example, assuming that a Pasifika student will have insight into a text representing her culture can result in resentment or embarrassment if she is expected to respond for the benefit of non-Pasifika students. The Te Kotahitanga program teacher training offers several methods for avoiding this type of classroom dynamic, the most important being building relationships of care with students through dialogue and support (Bishop et al., "Te Kotahitanga 787). Demonstrating critical pedagogical practices of decentering the authority of the teacher through problem-posing can also help students to feel "jointly responsible" for knowledge production in the classroom (Freire 79). In general, but especially when teaching texts outside of my own cultural background, I position myself as a learner alongside students and avoid making assumptions about what they might know. Because I also frequently express my confidence in their abilities and a desire to see them succeed, I have found that most students trust our shared classroom space and share their expertise willingly.

Positioning Pasifika students as experts in the classroom has a number of important consequences. First, it validates Indigenous literacies as valuable and worthwhile knowledge. I have noticed that when my Pasifika students realize that they are capable of performing meaningful and in-depth textual analyses, their confidence grows; for many of them, my class is the first time they have been exposed to Pacific literature. The experience also helps them to understand why they often struggle to understand Western-centric texts—it is not the result of an

inherent intellectual lack, but rather a lack of cultural and historical knowledge. Taken together, I often observe an increase in academic self-esteem and an increased willingness to actively engage with difficult material later on. All of these consequences are equally important for settler youth, who are not only exposed to Indigenous concepts, but learn that there are texts that their Western academic training has not prepared them to understand. Seeing their Pasifika peers perform well academically also helps to undermine stereotypes about Pasifika youth as unintelligent and low achieving.

Another method to help students grapple with Indigenous texts is to invite Indigenous guests into the classroom. Dolores Calderon argues that one way to avoid appropriation and/or misapplication of Indigenous concepts is to build relationships with local Indigenous communities (26), particularly because "Indigenous knowledge(s)/cosmologies are many times the most viable knowledge systems related to place-based goals of critical sustainability, community building, and addressing issues of territoriality" (27). Joyce Rain Anderson agrees, emphasizing that teachers who invite Indigenous guests into their classrooms must "be willing and able to honor and form reciprocal relationships" including gift giving, supporting Indigenous community events and programming, and providing honorariums when possible (165). I also encourage students to participate in these relationships by assigning points or offering extra credit for students to attend on-campus as well as community events featuring Indigenous participants.

Teach Indigenous history and culture

As I have shown in the previous chapters, YALO is uniquely suited to engaging students with Indigenous concerns, and chief among these are history and culture. Anderson notes that in settler colonial contexts, "many [students] are unaware of how the land they walk upon as

‘acquired,’ and many are unaware of the survival of Native peoples” (Anderson 162). In fact, teaching YALO texts without historical or cultural contextualization will most likely result in reinforcing rather than subverting stereotypes, and ultimately negate any of the decolonial potential of the text. The way that I typically contextualize a novel is to have students form small “Research and Report” groups, each of which is assigned a different historical topic or cultural concept. For example, when I teach Kaopio's *Written in the Sky*, it's important for students to know the ongoing history of Kānaka Maoli land dispossession in order to understand the context of houselessness in Hawai'i. Some topics I may give for this activity:

- Native Hawaiian genealogical connection to land – find the moʻolelo connected with this (Hint: Hāloa)
- The Māhele land division of 1848[46]
- Current PIT (Point-in-time) statistics for homeless in Hawaiʻi, including statistics for Native Hawaiian homelessness
- Actions taken by the State of Hawai'i to address homelessness
- Puʻuhonua o Waiʻanae (Waiʻanae Boat Harbor Village)
- Cost of living in Hawaiʻi (emphasis on correlation between wages and housing prices)

Depending on the amount of time and/or technology available to the class, students perform their research and report during class, or complete their research for homework and report the next day. Of course, it is important to have done the research yourself beforehand to intervene in the event that students find incorrect or faulty information. I generally try to perform several searches on each topic beforehand so that I have an idea about what search terms will yield the most helpful results and what sources students might need to look out for in the event that any of the groups need guidance. It is important for me pedagogically to avoid providing all of the

pertinent information via lecture or class resources; doing the research themselves helps students to engage with the content more fully, and reporting asks them to take responsibility for the information that they are sharing with the rest of the class. Consequently, it requires students to take ownership of the knowledge they share, confronting and working through potentially uncomfortable information via their own discovery process.

Focus on land and experiential learning

Once students understand the context of the novel, it is important that they are able to connect the story's context to place and ultimately, to praxis. Because place is integral to any discussion of Indigenous issues, students should interrogate representations of place as they encounter it in YALO. Often, students assume that if they don't readily recognize place names in a piece of fiction, the author made them up. When I teach Kuwada's short story "Of No Real Account," for example, students are invariably surprised to find that all of the place names used in the story represent real places on the island of Oʻahu—only those names have been overwritten by colonial forces. As a class, we remap the island of Oʻahu using the place names provided by Kuwada, reinscribing Kānaka Maoli conceptions of place. The story is likewise filled with allusions to other moʻolelo, all of which are also connected to wahi pana, or "places made famous through stories told about them" (hoʻomanawanui, *Voices* 42). This is significant, because as Cristina Bacchilega explains, "animated and specific localization is the backbone—not the ornamentation—of much traditional Hawaiian narrative" (37). Because wahi pana are inherently linked to history, I see this as an important decolonial project that allows students to "see" the island from an Indigenous perspective. Learning histories overwritten by colonial naming practices and physical development makes those overwritings more visible to students, and as a result challenges them to rethink their understanding of place and land in Hawaiʻi.

Because of this, as a follow-up assignment to our remapping of the island based on Kuwada's story, I ask students to choose a place on Oʻahu, perhaps their hometown or the area in which they currently live, and remap it with Hawaiian place-names after visiting and "experiencing" it. I share my own remapping project from my hometown of Lāʻie, where I researched the place names of the beaches along the coast of Koʻolau Loa and committed to refer to them only by their Hawaiian names. While this often resulted in confusion when speaking with other people from Koʻolau Loa, it is an important small decolonial project that I continue to practice. I challenge my students to do the same once they have done the work of remapping their own place.

Encourage Creative Projects

Another method that I use to engage students in praxis surrounding Pacific literary production is by encouraging them to engage in the political act of creating decolonial literature, including underrepresented subgenres like YALO. In my Introduction to Literature courses at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, I offer students a creative option for their final projects, which might include poetry, short stories, and/or multi-genre experimentation. The assignment asks students to create an Oceanic coming of age narrative that is realistic OR an adaptation of an Oceanic story/form; the students then submit their work with a brief critical reflection on the purpose of the piece and some of the artistic choices that went into creating it. Importantly, because this is not a creative writing course, I emphasize that I weight the grade in favor of the decolonial concept behind the story rather than on students' ability to execute it artistically. On the last day of class, students share excerpts from their work with the class, and I challenge students to revise and submit their work for publication in one of the various student journals on campus. I find that many of my Pasifika students chose the creative project rather than the

alternative literary analysis, and often draw from their own experiences in crafting their work. I have received powerful stories in multiple genres including comics, narrative personal essays interspersed with place-based photography and art, vignette series, brief theatre scripts, and short stories. For example, I have received a series of vignettes that illustrate scenes negotiating the experiences of diasporic Tongan teenagers; a creative nonfiction reflection on returning to the Hawai‘i island countryside after experiencing a year of college in urban Honolulu; a children’s picture book depicting the planets in our solar system welcoming the arrival of the new dwarf planet, Haumea; and a short film script for a scene in which the protagonist completes his first deep-sea free-dive off the Kona coast. While most to date have declined to pursue publication of their work, I continue to encourage students to become part of the solution to various Pasifika issues through their creative work. I hold out hope that one day this small assignment leads some of my students to fulfilling work as literary activists. Another option could be to develop the assignment into an end-of-semester class publication that allows the students’ work to live beyond a single semester.

Engage in Digital Activism

Like adolescents worldwide, Oceanic youth are well connected to the digital world. Even youth living in more remote island nations with less access to devices and internet connections find ways to socialize online, as many of my students from the Islands can attest. As a result, I ask my students to connect the issues they encounter in YALO with what they are experiencing online—and then take action. One aspect of praxis that I am currently refining is the incorporation of digital literacies as integral tools for addressing contemporary Indigenous issues, including decolonization in the literal sense. As Sidney Dobrin argues, writing studies is increasingly “not just inextricably bound with digital technologies and media, but

indistinguishable from them" (15). One of the benefits of a collective online approach to activism is that technology—in the form of social media—helps to create connections between Indigenous peoples globally, strengthens and contextualizes Indigenous movements, and creates solidarity among Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups fighting for land and self-determination. Recent examples of the ways Indigenous peoples have utilized digital literacies to enact decolonial projects in specific places include the ongoing We Are Mauna Kea movement in Hawai‘i and the historic gathering in 2016 of North American tribes protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in North Dakota. In both cases, social media provided live news and updates on-site to supporters throughout the world, garnering global support despite mainstream media silence. Because of its transformative, collaborative, and subversive potential, I argue that Indigenizing digital literacies for Indigenous purposes is an important project of the new ‘afakasi pedagogy, especially considering how active Pasifika youth are on social media platforms. Some of the critical pedagogical practices that I enact in my courses include assignments that require students to post place-based arguments online for real audiences and asking students to address problems in place (for example, on campus or in the local community) through collaborative grassroots social media campaigns. I also forward Scott Richard Lyons's strategy of studying Indigenous rhetoric in the place-based classroom (464) by examining social media artifacts—videos, articles, hashtags—that illustrate Indigenous digital activism in behalf of places like Standing Rock and Mauna Kea. I see this emphasis on Indigenous digital literacies as an important aspect of harnessing students' fluency in social media use in the pursuit of Indigenous and activist goals.

Conclusion

Ongoing efforts to indigenize education in Oceania have been and will continue to be met with complex challenges both materially and ideologically, but thoughtful and consistent application of curricula based in Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies has the potential to transform Indigenous Oceanic identities, economies, and politics. YALO is an intervention in this area that can be implemented in the short-term while providing continuity in the long-term as programs (hopefully) become more aligned with Indigenous methods. The ramifications of this approach for settler educators and students are likewise promising, as taking an Indigenous approach to reading Indigenous texts asks them to confront the realities of Indigenous histories and their own complicity in ongoing settler agendas.

CONCLUSION: YALO AND OCEANIC FUTURES

I see the growing popularity and relevance of YALO as analogous to the coming of age of academic, artistic, and political decolonization movements throughout the Pacific; that we are seeing an expansion of literary offerings targeted beyond adults and small children is an indicator that the field is maturing and diversifying, with a focus on building the future rather than on reacting to the past. Consequently, we must begin to develop a distinct subset of criticism to examine these texts. In a region that is increasingly diasporic, YALO is sometimes the first exposure to Oceanic cultures and languages for youth. The arguments that I have made in this project clearly demonstrate the integral role of narrative in our lives. As King, Gubele and Anderson remind us,

> the stories we tell about ourselves and about our world frame our perceptions, our relationships, our actions, and our ethics. They change our reality. The stories we tell each other tell us who we are, locate us in time and space and history and land, and suggest who gets to speak and how. (King, Gubele, & Anderson 3)

In Oceania today, more stories denigrate our youth than build them up, and these stories threaten to continue cycles of colonial violence that result in Pasifika youth who grow into Pasifika adults unable to imagine a different way forward. As a genre that exemplifies and celebrates the ‘afakasi identity of Oceanic youth, YALO has the potential to intervene by modeling new ways to be and locating identity and responsibility for both Pasifika and settler youth in an increasingly fragmented world. Tackling issues of representation in literature and providing access to books that are relevant to the experiences of Pacific Islander youth has the potential to transform literacy and educational achievement, while building the critical/cultural consciousness of the youth who will become the leaders of our Pasifika and settler communities.

If we as scholars hope to encourage the growth of high-quality literature in this area, we need to undertake multidisciplinary scholarship that examines, evaluates, and interprets it. Additionally, developing resources for teachers and librarians is an important step in bringing these texts more successfully into formal educational settings, which is a key arena for exposing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth to Oceanic issues and perspectives.

As an ʻafakasi genre, YALO is also well-positioned to work as a subversive decolonial tool that increases the consumption and creation of Pacific literature. Kuwada explains that while Hawaiian art forms have achieved a great deal of success since the Hawaiian Renaissance, they are often created in the realm of "high art," easily accessible only to critics, the highly educated, and in this context, adults: "Having Hawaiian culture taken seriously is clearly something that we need to continue to strive for, but some of these connections to high art, instead of raising the esteem of many of these arts, have served to alienate large swathes of the young Hawaiian population, who see these arts as ʻnot for them'" (Kuwada 110). The claim that artistic production appeals to a narrow audience is not a new one; within the wider field of Oceanic literature scholars have noted since early on that much of the literature written by Oceanians is often only read, produced, and recognized by a small group of "educated elites" (Subramani, *South Pacific* 23). In his initial attempt to map the emerging field of Pacific literature, Subramani also identifies a need for "middle-range literature" that could "woo" readers to more literary work of authors like Albert Wendt, for example (*South Pacific* 26). In my own personal experience, the number of Samoans who have even heard of Pacific literary juggernaut Wendt (let alone having read his work) is a very small number—as Teaiwa asserts, "We [Pacific islanders] are a people who do not read" (231). While this lack is often—and legitimately—ascribed to our literatures being traditionally oral (and also encompassing the visual, musical,

and dance), Long argues that children's (written) literature plays an important role in building adult readership:

> Pacific Islands writers who write books for children not only speak to a readership now; they also create an audience for the Pacific literature of tomorrow….A novelist may hope to change a reader's outlook. Poets may want to place their hands on a readers' soul. But the authors of children's books do something more: they are also engaged, in some profound sense, in the very creation of readers. (232)

In other words, continued dismissal of literary production and criticism for young readers threatens to maintain current levels of apathetic adult readers, which ultimately undermines the stability of the entire field of Oceanic literature; on the other hand, this unique function means that YALO holds the key to creating a more robust and healthy future for the field. Marsh noted fairly recently that "in 2015 the state of Pasifika writing is strong. Rich in drama, poetry, and filmmaking, there is a noticeable shortage of novelists and short story writers, who will no doubt follow" ("Nafanua" 369). While Marsh is referring specifically to literary production in Aotearoa New Zealand, these trends are fairly consistent throughout Oceania. One exception to this, however, is YALO, which not only consists primarily of novels, but is leading the production of novels within the larger field of Pacific literatures.

One of the most promising aspects of this project is that it makes clear that there is a great deal of potential for additional scholarship that examines literary production for youth in Oceania. One area that should be addressed as soon as possible is poetry, both by and for youth; this includes written poetry as well as performance poetry. Likewise, a growing number of visual YALO texts in the form of graphic novels, murals, and comics should be studied for their increased ability to engage reluctant readers while also drawing on what Teaiwa calls "the visual

roots of Pacific literature" (730). Another subset of YALO texts worth reading and analyzing are a small handful of fantastical novels written by Pasifika authors, including science fiction, fantasy, and dystopian. Other genres worth examining for their ability to engage with youth multiliteracies include film, gaming, comedy, and other forms of digital storytelling and cultural production on social media and the internet.

Another potential avenue for academic inquiry is the new 'afakasi methodology, which can be usefully applied to a wide range of Pacific literatures, including YALO and adolescent literatures in earlier decades, as well as any text with minor characters that are teens. It can also be brought to bear on any texts dealing with mixed identity, slang or 'afakasi languages such as HCE, or, as I begin to demonstrate in chapter four, in educational settings.

Finally, there is much that can be researched in the area of literary production. YALO is a dynamic place to begin examining the developing e-book and self-publishing market in the Pacific, which is being trailblazed primarily by YALO authors. Unable to find traditional publishing houses to support their stories and/or creative decisions, these authors have found success in creating, marketing, and selling their books online, building a supportive community that is changing the way Oceanic literature is published while successfully creating new readers of it both within the region and abroad.

When brought to bear on the literary production of Oceania, YALO has great potential to invigorate scholarship and educational initiatives that work "to raise awareness, appreciation and support – not just ephemeral theoretical support, but tangible support" for youth in the region (Marsh, "The Body" 4). Ultimately, the stakes of this project are fundamentally tied to the future of Oceania and its peoples. YALO is an important site for increasing literacy and self-esteem for Pasifika youth; additionally, these texts play an important role in shaping the attitudes and

assumptions of settler youth and adults, who constitute a significant portion of the population within the region and the majority in the diaspora. In fact, the acronym YALO resonates with the name of one of the staple crops in the region, kalo/dalo—and I like to think that it is a literature that can provide nourishment for all of our youth as they grow into confident, creative leaders. My hope for this work is that it will provide more widespread awareness and understanding of existing YALO texts as well as increased use of them to build critical literacy in schools. When I think about the stakes of this project, I see the faces of family members, friends, and youth in this community (past, present, and future), and wonder how their lives might be—or have been—different with the right books accompanying them through their formative adolescent years.

Notes

[1] The multiple categories implicated under the umbrella term "Pacific literature" have prompted scholars to argue for the use of "literatures of the Pacific" as a more accurate term. I maintain the use of "Pacific literature" or "Oceanic literature" here as it remains the phrase most commonly used to describe the field.

[2] In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith problematizes the term "indigenous" by pointing out that "it appears to collectivize many distinct populations whose experiences under colonialism have been vastly different" in addition to eliding the many deeply rooted and significant names that peoples have for identifying themselves (6). However, she notes that a general definition of indigenous peoples as a "network of peoples" that "share experiences as peoples who have been subjected to the colonization of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty, by a colonizing society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives, even after it has formally pulled out" (7). In this work, I define all Pacific Island peoples as Indigenous because, despite different experiences of colonialism throughout the region, all island groups have experienced colonial dispossession as a result of a colonizing society.

[3] It is important to point out that Indigenous Pacific Islanders throughout Oceania had a robust history of literacy and publication practices prior to the appearance of *Miss Ulysses*, most notably in Hawai'i (Sharrad, "Making Beginnings" 121; Teaiwa 731). In fact, Subramani's claim that *Miss Ulysses* was the first literary work written by a Pacific islander (*South Pacific* 14), and the announcement on the back cover of the 2nd edition of *Miss Ulysses* that it "was the first publication by a Pacific Island woman writer" (Frisbie) ignore much earlier publications by

Hawaiian intellectuals, including the 1898 publication of Lili‘uokalani’s *Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen*.

[4] I use the terms adolescent, teen, and youth interchangeably to refer to individuals negotiating adolescence, or the stage of life between childhood and adulthood. Note that these terms are only interchangeable when referring to people, as there are important academic distinctions when they are used to describe literature, which I outline in chapter one.

[5] I use interpellation in the Althusserian sense as a process in which *“*ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects,” and that we become subjects when we answer the call (117). It is used in the Western sense in relation to colonial ideologies, although I also use it in relation to decolonial and Indigenous ideologies for lack of an overarching Pasifika term. Of course, this comes with the understanding that it may function in somewhat different ways from culture group to culture group. I use iterations of the word “decolonial” and “decolonize” in the literal sense described by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang as the return of lands to Indigenous peoples, although with the understanding that ideological decolonization, or “decolonization of the mind” (Thiong’o) is an important first step to achieving this outcome.

[6] A similar phenomenon due to the influx of Asian immigrants in Hawai‘i has resulted in a pan-minority “Local” identity characterized by shared language (HCE) and class.

[7] For more discussion on the term and its history, see Marsh (“Pasifika Poetry”), Karlo Mila, and Tanya Wendt Samu.

[8] Similar terms are used in other Pacific cultures, for example ‘hapa’ in Hawaiian or ‘hafekasi’ in Tongan.

[9] For more on the complex history of ‘afakasi in colonial Samoa, see Meleisea and Serge Tchérkezoff.

[10] Albert Wendt defines the Samoan concept of Va as "the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things" ("Afterword" 402).

[11] For more on the appropriation of hapa as a term for mixed race, see Karen Manges Douglas.

[12] I attempt as much as possible to provide representation from throughout the region, but uneven publication opportunities and the difficulty of finding and subsequently gaining access to texts means that this work is primarily Hawai‘i-based.

[13] Due to the development of what the Indigenous Action Media calls an "ally industrial complex," defined as a system "established by activists whose careers depend on the 'issues' they work to address," ("Accomplices"), some groups have called for abandonment of the term "ally," which often affords temporary notions of "support" and/or "solidary" that that is "disembodied from any real mutual understanding of support" ("Accomplices"). Instead, these groups advocate for the use of the term "accomplice," which is "realized through mutual consent and build [sic] trust. They don't just have our backs, they are at our side, or in their own spaces confronting and unsettling colonialism. As accomplices we are compelled to become accountable and responsible to each other" ("Accomplices"). While I appreciate the more active connotation of accomplice and hope to see the concept and associated praxis gain more traction, I also recognize that ally is still a useful term, because in order for settlers to become accomplices, they must first become allies. I maintain the use of "ally" in this dissertation because reading decolonial fiction is only one step in shifting the ideological orientation of settlers in Oceania.

[14] According to Trites, adolescent literature encompasses any text with an adolescent protagonist, regardless of the intended audience. Under that umbrella falls the bildungsroman or "novel of

formation," which is defined as a coming-of-age narrative in which the child grows into adulthood over the course of the novel. Another category is the entwicklungsroman, or "novel of growth/development," in which the protagonist does not reach adulthood by the end of the story (Trites 10). The YA novel, which is distinguished by its target readership, falls most often under the category of the entwicklungsroman, but it can also be a bildungsroman depending on where we leave the protagonist at the end of the novel (Trites 9).

[15] Frow defines a complex genre as one that takes "two genres…into itself, enriching its own texture by drawing on their structural force" (44). He further explains that "any complex genre…is built out of allusions to and stylisations of other genres, and constructs its authority and credibility on this basis" (48).

[16] For a more in-depth discussion of additional factors contributing to a lack of theoretical engagement with YAL, see Caroline Hunt.

[17] Defined as a novel that has broad appeal for both teens and adult readers (J. Hunt 142).

[18] Traditionally defined as ages 12-19, Cart argues that since the mid-90's, the age range for YAL audiences extends all the way to age 25 (95). Millard similarly argues that contemporary coming of age narratives often have protagonists that do not mature until well into their twenties (5).

[19] For additional discussion of the tensions inherent in a genre written by one group for another, see Bradford.

[20] Haunani Kay Trask, Cristina Bacchilega, and ho'omanawanui ("Mo'olelo") outline some of the overwhelmingly negative political, cultural, religious, economic, and other effects of Western representations of Oceania and its peoples.

[21] McDougall defines Hawaiian literature as "the literature, both ancestral and contemporary, of Hawai‘i's Indigenous people" (169). She further defines "contemporary Hawaiian literature" as "both the written and oral literature composed by Kanaka Maoli from the 1960s to the present. Of course, in offering the 1960s as a periodic division, I also recognize that contemporary Hawaiian written literature is descended from and reflects on our tremendous oral literary inheritance. It is also a literary mo‘opuna, or grandchild, of our early written literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (McDougall, *Finding Meaning* 169). ho‘omanawanui defines Hawaiian literature as texts "produced by Kānaka Maoli (Native [ethnic] Hawaiians), the indigenous inhabitants genealogically connected to the archipelago known to the world as Hawai‘i. It is not regional in nature, that is, it is not simply the product of anyone who claims Hawai‘i as home. Nor is it thematic; it is not just any [literary work] about Hawai‘i…. I expand it to include literature that exhibits other key elements of culture aside from and in addition to ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, such as worldview, ethics, and values, including aesthetic, poetic and or rhetorical elements and devices, which are not necessarily confined to within ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i alone" ("He Aha Mo‘olelo" 8).

[22] I use the term Kanaka Maoli to refer to individuals of Native Hawaiian descent, used interchangeably with the terms Hawaiian, Native Hawaiian, or Kanaka ‘Ōiwi.

[23] Racial marker identifying an individual of mixed Hawaiian and other (usually Caucasian) ancestry.

[24] Term used to describe a resident or citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand without Pacific Island ancestry.

[25] HCE is a language that developed in Hawai‘i as a result of linguistic barriers between various groups in the islands. It has been used as a form of linguistic resistance by both minority settlers

and Native Hawaiians. For a more in-depth history and discussion, see Georganne Nordstrom ("Pidgin").

[26] Beings in Māori tradition similar to eels, serpents, or dragons that live in waterways or caves.

[27] Tuck and Yang use the term "settler futurity" to refer to settlers' ability to secure continued presence and prosperity on Indigenous lands.

[28] "Houseless" is a term often used to describe homeless Kanaka Maoli using the logic that because Hawaiians are genealogically connected to the ʻāina (land), they are always already home when they are in Hawaiʻi.

[29] In Hawaiian moʻolelo, Māui uses this legendary fishhook to pull the Hawaiian islands out of the sea.

[30] For more on fa'afafine, see Dan Taulapapa McMullin.

[31] Known by a variety of names throughout the region, kava, or the *Piper methysticum* plant, is harvested for its root, which is pounded into a fine powder and strained into water. The resulting drink causes a minor numbing effect that relaxes the body. Traditionally, kava was usually reserved for ceremonial purposes, but today many Pasifika peoples drink it casually (and frequently) in social settings.

[32] Mila's conception of "polycultural" is similar to my articulation of the new ʻafakasi; however, Mila's primary concern is culture, whereas I am interested in any aspect of multiplicity or mixed subjectivity.

[33] Mila's study focuses on second-generation Pasifika youth in Aotearoa New Zealand, who may or may not be racially ʻafakasi, but whose mixed cultural and national identities qualify them as ʻafakasi under my expanded definition of the term.

[34] For more discussion on the visual influences of Indigenous cultural and material production on written Pacific literatures, see Teaiwa and Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner.

[35] While a great deal of Pacific children's literature (particularly picture books) is written in vernacular languages, YALO texts, like their adult/general audience counterparts, are primarily written in English or French.

[36] Fāgogo, loosely translated as fables, are traditionally told in the evenings and can include a mix of myths and legends and/or more contemporary history, limited only by the storyteller's imagination. Fāgogo are also mixed in format; one fagogo might include narrative, singing, chanting, and even dance. The audience is also often called on to participate in the storytelling. For more discussion about fāgogo, see Efi, Long, and Jackson-Beccera.

[37] Kuwada explains that "a common understanding of 'mo'olelo' is as a succession of talk, which often gets read as a reference to the way stories and knowledge were passed down through the Hawaiian oral tradition" (109). McDougall's composite term "ola (i) nā mo'olelo" can thus be conceptualized as "'ola nā mo'olelo' (the mo'olelo live) and 'ola i nā mo'olelo' (Live the mo'olelo, or live because of the mo'olelo), intended to recognize how we live mo'olelo and how mo 'olelo live through us" (McDougall, *Finding Meaning* 3).

[38] McDougall defines kaona as "meaning that can be hidden in plain sight, meaning that, on the surface, may seem casual, trivial, or ornamental" to those unfamiliar with Kanaka Maoli symbolism and language (*Finding Meaning* 23).

[39] While *Where We Once Belonged* falls firmly within the umbrella of adolescent literature, I do not classify it as YALO because the novel's audience is arguably adult readers rather than adolescents.

[40] According to Pukui and Elbert, Menehune are "a legendary race of small people who worked at night, building fish ponds, roads, temples; if the work was not finished in one night, it remained unfinished" (246). In the series, Uncle Kahana feeds them dinner each night while they watch *Survivor* reruns on TV. Pukui and Elbert define ʻaumakua as "family or personal gods, deified ancestors who might assume the shape" of various animals, rocks, or plants (32). The main ʻaumakua in the Niuhi Shark Saga is Pohaku, a round stone that sits at the end of Piko Point in Lauele and acts as an intermediary between Niuhi and Uncle Kahana. Finally, akua is a name given to a variety of beings, including "god, goddess, spirit, ghost, devil, image, idol, corpse," with connotations of "divine, supernatural, godly" (Pukui and Elbert 15). I use akua in this work to mean god, and specifically in reference to Kanaloa.

[41] While details vary across different regions in Aotearoa, patupaiarehe are generally described as a population of pale, supernatural people who live in the forests and mountains. They are known for an aversion to cooked food and ability to move easily in darkness and mist (Wikaira).

[42] For more discussion on issues surrounding outside funding for educational initiatives in Oceania, see Jourdan and Salaün, Teasdale et al., and Nabobo-Baba.

[43] For example, Wendt Young's Telesa books cost about $3 USD each as e-books on Amazon.com. In contrast, the paperback version costs $15.40 USD. Access date 14 April 2018.

[44] Considering Nordstrom's distinction that "liberatory pedagogy departs from critical pedagogy in that it is more aggressive in its promotion of active resistance" ("Locating Students" 61), I maintain the use of critical pedagogy here because the goals of the Indigenous education that I advocate are more closely aligned with developing student awareness of the colonial structures at play in Indigenous dispossession, which may or may not necessitate immediate active resistance.

[45] For an in-depth discussion about each of these concepts and additional pedagogical strategies associated with their use, see L. King.

[46] The Māhele land division of 1848 paved the way for privatization of land ownership in Hawai‘i, eventually allowing foreigners to buy land that had previously been held communally in trust between the ruling and working classes of Hawaiian society (Iaukea 48-9).

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